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BOSTON AND NEW YORK

THE SHOES THAT DANCED

AND OTHER POEMS

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and Other Poems

By ANNA HEMPSTEAD BRANCH

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BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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SECOND IMPRESSION

TO

MARY A. JORDAN

TRUE TEACHER AND DEAR FRIEND

153261

CONTENTS

THE SHOES THAT DANCED 1

THE RIDERS 55

WHILE LOVELINESS GOES BY 60

SWEET WEARINESS 61

THE WOUND 62

A SONNET FOR THE EARTH 63

MY FOOLISH DEEDS 64

SONNETS FOR NEW YORK CITY 65

I. NEW YORK AT SUNRISE 65

II. A POLITICAL "BOSS" 66

III. SHAME ON THEE, O MANHATTAN . . 67

IV. THE FOUNTAIN OF LIFE 68

TO A NEW YORK SHOP-GIRL DRESSED FOR SUNDAY 69

FORGETFULNESS 73

THE PURITAN 75

THE JOURNEY 79

THE RETURN 83

KNOWLEDGE 84

THE ROAD OF SLEEP 85

SPRING SONG 87

IN A VISION OF THE NIGHT 90

THE STORM 98
TO DUST RETURNING 101
A GIRL'S SONG IN THE WILDERNESS . . . 107
THE MADONNA OF THE EARTH 109
LADIES FAIR 118
GRIEVE NOT, LADIES 120
THE DESCENDANT AND THE ID 122
GLADNESS 134
TO NATURE 136
SERVICE 137
OH, TELL ME THAT THE BIRD HAS WINGS . . 139
FIRST SIGHT 140
TO BEAUTY 142
THE BLESSÈD HANDS OF SLEEP 143
WHO WON THE DAY? 144
THE SLEEP IN GETHSEMANE 146
MAXIMS FOR AN OLD HOUSE 147
THE COMMON LOT 151
SONGS FOR MY MOTHER 153
I. MY MOTHER'S CLOTHES 153
II. HER HANDS 154
III. HER WORDS 155
IV. HER STORIES 157
EVE'S SONG 159
THE THEATRE-CURTAIN 163
THE PILGRIM 168
A MOTHER'S SONG 170

CLOD OF THE EARTH 172
THE DREAMING MAN 173
UNDER THE TREES 180
ORA PRO NOBIS 185

THE SHOES THAT DANCED

SCENE: WATTEAU'S *Studio.* LANCRET, *his pupil, works at a painting.* WATTEAU'S *portrait of the* QUEEN, *which has recently gained for him the appointment of Court Painter, occupies a prominent position. There is a burst of singing, a clamor of voices, and* PIERRETTE *and* FAUSTINE, *ballet dancers, accompanied by* COURTIN, *an artist, frolic into the studio.*

VOICES (*singing outside*)

Blossoms perish in the snow!
Columbine won't kiss Pierrot.

(*Shouts*)

The New Academician!

Court Favorite!

[*Enter* COURTIN *with* FAUSTINE *and* PIERRETTE]

ALL (*singing*)

Blossoms floating in the wine,
Harlequin loved Columbine!

COURTIN

Watteau!

FAUSTINE

Where is Watteau?

LANCRET

He 's out.

PIERRETTE

To-day?

FAUSTINE

Why, sir, to-day the queen comes to the studio
To see her portrait!

COURTIN (*looking at* WATTEAU'S *portrait of the* QUEEN)

Oh, majestic Lady!
With all her pride and beauty painted here
As real as life. Insolent loveliness!
And in her hands — for woman's vanity —
Watteau has sketched the world! What she will have,
That she will have, — most arrogant of queens,
That never knew denial. God himself
Refuses her not anything at all
Save lovely meekness. So in very truth
This Lady has for hers the great round world
To give or take.

FAUSTINE

To-day she only gives,
And Watteau has the bounty.

COURTIN (*saluting the portrait*)

To the queen —
That rescued him from an oblivion
Thick as Egyptian darkness. Yesterday
He hired out to a confectioner
And painted little Cupids upon bonbons —

PIERRETTE

On bonbons!

FAUSTINE

Cupids!

PIERRETTE

Watteau's masterpieces!

COURTIN

To buy him bread.

LANCRET

Or painted — Columbines!

FAUSTINE (*indignantly*)

The Columbine!

PIERRETTE

What is there in that creature
That artists all pursue her!

FAUSTINE (*humming*)

Blossoms lead the April in!
Columbine flounced Harlequin!

COURTIN

Now fortune changes, and in one brief day
This portrait charms the eye of royalty,
And makes Watteau the painter to the queen.

FAUSTINE (*in acclamation*)

Watteau!

PIERRETTE (*joyously*)

Court painter!

COURTIN

Lancret, you are silent.

LANCRET

I am at work.

FAUSTINE

On what, Monsieur Lancret?

LANCRET

I paint — the queen.

FAUSTINE

Like great Watteau!

COURTIN

Disciple!
You catch the master's spirit.

LANCRET (*morosely*)

No — not yet! —
The dance, the dream, the fire, the poised music!
[WATTEAU *enters the studio, and joins the group unseen*]
If I could see his heart —

WATTEAU

Look to your own.

FAUSTINE

Watteau!

LANCRET

The master!

WATTEAU

To your own, I say.

And find perchance some spelling writ thereon
By the hand of God. 'T will prove instructive, maybe,
As aught of mine.

LANCRET (*pointing to* WATTEAU'S *portrait*)

Nay, master, I can never
Accomplish — *that.*

WATTEAU

True! Who in all the world
Can paint such splendor? I am the one Watteau
That Heaven has achieved.
And yet — poor humdrum!
Thou art not what I dreamed! What is success?
Since all our triumphs are but shadows at noon
Whereby we measure failure. Let it be!
I hate the work of my hands. I am not like God.
I look upon it and do not find it good.

LANCRET

Not good!

FAUSTINE (*gazing at portrait*)

I beg of you, Monsieur Watteau,
Paint *me!*

PIERRETTE

Yes — make us beautiful, Watteau —
The little ballet dancers!

FAUSTINE

Oh, Watteau!
Have you grown scornful now you go to court?

PIERRETTE

He only strives to please great ladies!

FAUSTINE

Called
To deck the boudoir of the queen with Cupids!

PIERRETTE

To charm her walls with fauns that dance!

FAUSTINE

To wreathe
Her fan with roses!

WATTEAU

No.

LANCRET

To what then, master,
Has the queen summoned great Watteau?

WATTEAU

My friend,
The queen has bade me to the Sistine Chapel —

FAUSTINE

Never!

PIERRETTE

For what?

COURTIN

What would she have you paint?

WATTEAU

A great Madonna.

FAUSTINE

You!

PIERRETTE

Watteau!

COURTIN

But man —
To paint — Madonnas!

WATTEAU

Well —

COURTIN

Who could have thought
Watteau had dreamed of this!

WATTEAU

Yet I have dreamed!

COURTIN

But can you do it?

WATTEAU

(*Producing from a box a pair of satin slippers, exquisitely painted, and handing one of them to* COURTIN)
Look!

COURTIN

But this is —

WATTEAU

Shoes!

FAUSTINE

A lady's slipper!

COURTIN

Watteau turned shoemaker!

PIERRETTE

Blue satin!

COURTIN

For some foolish girl to dance in.

LANCRET

What craft!

WATTEAU

I painted Cupids round the edge.

COURTIN

But man —

LANCRET

He 's mad. Let him alone.

WATTEAU

Why so?

LANCRET

These figures are perfect!

WATTEAU

That is what I thought.

COURTIN

It 's worth a thousand francs!

WATTEAU

Indeed!

COURTIN

A thousand?
It 's worth a fortune! Show it to the queen,
For what she covets that she surely buys.

LANCRET

The fineness of it! 'T is a masterpiece.

COURTIN

You can do all things!

FAUSTINE

Rosebuds — butterflies —
And little Cupids round and round about.

LANCRET

How nonchalant he is!

COURTIN

Watteau, you fool —
Be all distraught with it! Roll a frenzied eye!

Shout out, "I did it!" Be inebriate
With the cup of glory. Stagger splendidly.
Shout out, "I did it!"

WATTEAU

Have you seen the sole?

LANCRET (*turning shoe over*)

A Madonna!

FAUSTINE

Ah!

COURTIN

Watteau, this little shoe
Is filled with fortune — painted o'er with fame
And immortality.

WATTEAU

You compliment me.

LANCRET

You were born for greatness.

WATTEAU

Yes.

LANCRET (*examining painting*)

But what a face!

WATTEAU

That is my dream, to fill the Sistine Chapel.

COURTIN

There 's nothing out of reach. The crucifixion!
Archangels! Ah — but how that blazoned chapel
Will roar with fiery wings!

FAUSTINE

Drawn on the sole!

WATTEAU

What would you?

COURTIN

Sketched upon a block of gold
In lasting lineaments. Why, satin, man,
Is a most fragile substance.

WATTEAU

So they say.

PIERRETTE

But one time round upon a polished floor
Will ruin this splendor.

WATTEAU

That 's the beauty of it.

PIERRETTE

But a Madonna!

COURTIN

On a lady's slipper!

WATTEAU

To show that she for whom I made this shoe
Owns all my craftsmanship! I painted them
For Columbine to dance in —

LANCRET (*jealously*)

Columbine!

COURTIN (*enthusiastically*)

The prettiest dancer in the whole ballet!
Rosebuds and Cupids, flower o' thistle down.
[*Enter* COLUMBINE *wrapped in a scarlet mantle*]
Most fragile, fine spun, silver, fitful, fair —

COLUMBINE

I thank you, good Courtin! Come here, Pierrette.
Take off my mantle.

PIERRETTE

I will not touch it.

COLUMBINE

How?
She 's jealous! Faustine?
(FAUSTINE *makes a gesture of refusal.* LANCRET *and* COURTIN *assist in taking mantle*)
Thank you, gentlemen.
(*She shines resplendent in a ballet gown*)
I came between the acts of the rehearsal.
The queen will be there when I dance to-night.
Pray you, does anybody like my gown?

COURTIN

We all admire it.

PIERRETTE

Oh, I hate this girl!

COLUMBINE

She says she hates me!

FAUSTINE

This air stifles me.

COLUMBINE

I make her sick! The good Lord made me so.
Is it naughty, then, to be so beautiful?
Monsieur Watteau — and have you any news?

WATTEAU

Look at this portrait.

(*Displays portrait of* QUEEN *holding in her hands the world*)

COLUMBINE

Well?

WATTEAU

So slight a thing —
Yet it has brought me wealth, preferment, honor!
And that great world I painted in her hands
She gives to me.

COLUMBINE

What — does she —

WATTEAU

Listen, child.
I am made Court Painter.

COLUMBINE (*as if startled*)

Oh, Monsieur Lancret!

WATTEAU

The queen has bade me to the Sistine Chapel
To paint — Madonnas.

COLUMBINE (*indifferently*)

But, Monsieur Watteau,
Where are the slippers that you promised me
To dance in?

WATTEAU

Child — but hear me for a moment.
This is the day when all my dreams come true,
And Poverty no longer with a sword
Bids Watteau back from that high Paradise
Wherein are mighty deeds. My hour has come.
Great barren walls that cry aloud for wings!
How I will blazon them with the vast glories
Of Heaven and Earth and Purgatory and Hell!

COLUMBINE

Watteau! The painted slippers!

WATTEAU

Columbine,
Just for a moment hear me — and rejoice!
Be glad for me. My dreams rush on like tempests
Full of great sound and fire. Heaven calls me.
Raphael says come, and Michael Angelo
Thunders affection from St. Peter's Dome.
The air is full of flaming robes of Titian,

And pale sweet faces of Leonardo. Rembrandt
Disturbs my slumber! All the mighty visions
I have dreamed of so long, — the wings, the haloes, —
And high above the altar, pale with glory,
My great Madonna —

COLUMBINE

Watteau — my satin slippers.

WATTEAU (*putting them in her hands*)

Then take them.

COLUMBINE

Beautiful!

WATTEAU

Rosebuds and Cupids!

COLUMBINE

I 'll dance before the queen.

COURTIN

Nay — on the sole
Is sketched his masterpiece.

COLUMBINE (*examining sole*)

What —

WATTEAU

The Madonna.

COLUMBINE

Painted for me! Oh! if the queen could see
them
How she would envy them — the satin slippers,
That are the ballet dancer's — Columbine's.

(*Shouts are heard outside*)

VOICES (*outside*)

Watteau! Watteau! Court Painter!

[BOY *runs in*]

BOY

Sir, the guild
Of Paris Artists, outside in the street —

VOICES (*outside*)

Watteau!

BOY

Would honor you!

VOICES

Watteau!

COURTIN (*to* WATTEAU)

Out, then,
And quiet them.

[WATTEAU *goes out with all but* COLUMBINE *and* LANCRET, *who remain in the studio*]

VOICES (*outside*)

Watteau !

COLUMBINE

Monsieur Lancret,
I will be frank with you, since time is brief.

LANCRET (*wearily*)

So frankness has a reason, Columbine ?

COLUMBINE

But tease me not. This portrait rivals Watteau's.
I could not tell the difference.

LANCRET

I have stolen,
As a beggar steals a cloak to hide his rags,
A purple garment for my shabby talent,
The master's style.

COLUMBINE

Who can do, may do, Lancret.
I want the world for you.

LANCRET

Frail Columbine —
Purchased with glories!

COLUMBINE

Glory I will have!
And stars to drink from and the sky to dance on.
Yes, shod with wind, this Columbine would dance,
Dance, dance for centuries. Listen, Lancret,
I die without my splendors. Lancret, listen.
Do you desire me?

LANCRET

Child, what are you worth?

COLUMBINE

I love you, Lancret!

LANCRET

Love?

COLUMBINE

But I have labored

To bring you fortune. Coaxed the great sad
painter,
That loves not women but loves Columbine,
To teach you for my sake his mellow glories.
How I have seen you learning day by day
The master's powers and to this very end,
That you should be — hush ! Longed to smile on
you,
Yet dared not, lest he see and understand.
My protégé I called you. A light boy
Worth helping only — a sort of studio spaniel
I liked to keep about me. So I won
His favor for you and the golden teachings
Watteau sells at no price but gives to you
To please — the Columbine. Oh, I have dreamed
Of honors, honors — such as the world can give —

LANCRET

And stolen from Watteau.

COLUMBINE

Listen, Lancret,
At the opera all the dancers talk of you —
Lancret — the new Apollo. At the court
Mademoiselle Felise, who dresses hair,
Tells me the boudoirs speak the name of Lan-
cret

Like a love spell. A wit, a beau, a gallant,
Gay chevalier — a genius too — great Lancret!

LANCRET

I will not listen.

COLUMBINE

But to-day the queen
Will come to see her portrait, and if then
She chanced to look on yours —

LANCRET

Beside Watteau's
How pale it is!

COLUMBINE

But if the master's hand
Coaxed by the Columbine should touch your portrait
With divine magic — often he has done so,
To make his meaning clear of light and shadow —
And if the queen — they tell me queens are fickle —

LANCRET

Even like Columbine?

COLUMBINE

But if the queen
Should see it — *then* —

LANCRET

I cannot listen.

COLUMBINE

Nay —
What if the master in a tempestuous mood
Of black despair, such absolute distaste
As takes him like a madness and undoes him
And what he makes — why, I have seen him burn
A masterpiece one bargained for in vain,
And he half starved, because he said it lacked
Some light, some music, the angels told him what!
You know the moods I mean. Well — if Watteau,
In such a spirit —

LANCRET

Hush!

COLUMBINE

Struck with his brush
(*Pointing to* WATTEAU'S *portrait of the* QUEEN)
Out, in one minute, that high and haughty smile,
Out, all the insolent glory of her face —

LANCRET (*with rebuke*)

He is my master.

COLUMBINE (*leaning over* LANCRET'S *portrait*)

If the queen's eye fell,
Then, upon this, Lancret —

LANCRET

Vainglorious child,
Does splendor purchase you?

[WATTEAU *enters.* COLUMBINE *goes to him*]

COLUMBINE

Lancret — I pledge
My hand to — the Court Painter.

WATTEAU

Columbine,
Is that a riddle?

COLUMBINE

No — Monsieur Watteau.

WATTEAU

You love my office?

COLUMBINE

No — Monsieur Watteau.
(*Draws him to* LANCRET'S *portrait of the* QUEEN)
Come! See this portrait. Let us criticise it
And tease the artist for the golden manner
He stole from you. The boy amuses me.
He strives so hard to be Watteau. Come! come!
Instruct my protégé.

WATTEAU

Why should I do so?

COLUMBINE

Because I ask you.

WATTEAU

That is cause enough.
Sound logic.

COLUMBINE

Oh, this little me! To think
I am so small and powerful. I feel
Big as a lion. Fear me, great Watteau.

WATTEAU

Well — so I do.

COLUMBINE

But why?

WATTEAU

White magic! Spell
Of little meaning that the wit denies
And yet the heart believes.

COLUMBINE

How well you praise me.
Put out your hand. How big! Now look at mine!
Master, which hand is stronger?

WATTEAU

Columbine's.

COLUMBINE

Speak more such words. What would you?

WATTEAU

Your heart.

COLUMBINE

Why — so —
'T is but a bauble.

WATTEAU

I would die for it.

COLUMBINE

Would you, Watteau? Then teach this silly boy
To learn his lesson.

WATTEAU (*curiously*)

Delilah? Oh, Delilah.

COLUMBINE

I am not.

WATTEAU

Ah?

COLUMBINE

Master, he is a truant
Not swift at learning. I would have him learn.

WATTEAU

But if the pupil should outstrip the master —
So gracious, fine, fashioned so shapely, fair
To please court ladies!

LANCRET

Master!

COLUMBINE

Oh, Watteau,
Teach him.

WATTEAU

But why ?

COLUMBINE

I love his sweetheart.

WATTEAU

True.
That is the very sterling coin of speech.
How could you spend it !

COLUMBINE

She dances next to me
In the ballet. The one in scarlet slippers.
Her name is Anastase.

WATTEAU

But wherefore lie ?

COLUMBINE

I promised her to help him.

WATTEAU

Wherefore lie ?
Yet such explicit guile is almost truth
It tells so on itself.

COLUMBINE (*pleading*)

Show him, Watteau.
Look, it needs *you*.

LANCRET

Master!

COLUMBINE

Then I will love you.

WATTEAU

Sure?

COLUMBINE

Oh, I will! I 'll take the heart of me
And put it in your hands.

WATTEAU

A sugar heart?
With white doves painted on it?

COLUMBINE

No, no, no!
A really, truly, really heart, Watteau.

WATTEAU (*to* LANCRET)

Lend me your oil.

LANCRET

Master, how you trust me.

WATTEAU

No, no! my son — I love you well, but never
Think that I trust you.

COLUMBINE (*holding oil for* WATTEAU)

The oil.

WATTEAU (*beginning work on* LANCRET'S *portrait*)

Now learn of me.

(*He scrutinizes the oil*)

Bah! But you keep it clean.

LANCRET

But —

WATTEAU

My own oil
Is full of dust; I clean it once a week.
And bits of stick and hair and cobweb too
I keep in it. Let moth and dust corrupt
What 's in this world.

LANCRET

But pardon me, Watteau,
Your colors fade the sooner.

WATTEAU

That 's why I do it.
I advise that you do likewise.
(*He has altered the portrait*)
Look!

COLUMBINE (*in triumph*)

He has done it.

WATTEAU

That 's all. But just a high light and a line.
A little, little line. 'T was just that much
That made the gulf on the Heaven side of Dives.
By Monsieur Lancret — portrait of the queen.
As good as mine, I think. (*Turning to his own*)
Ah — how I loathe it!
(*He turns again to* LANCRET's *portrait*)
I advise you, Lancret, place it where the queen
May see it.

LANCRET

But —

WATTEAU

It may advantage you.
For if she favors it above Watteau's —

COLUMBINE

Above your own, Watteau ?

(*They stand before* WATTEAU'S *portrait*)

WATTEAU

'T is failure.

COLUMBINE

Yet

The world would say success.

WATTEAU

Sweet Columbine—

The heart heeds not the applauding multitude
But its own judgment.

COLUMBINE

Nay—

WATTEAU

It sickens me.

COLUMBINE (*scheming*)

'T is not your best.

WATTEAU

What ?

COLUMBINE

In a conquering mood
Think what you might achieve with such a face!
Would I might see that portrait!

WATTEAU

I hate my work.
(*Is about to blot it out with his brush*)
I will destroy it.
(LANCRET *catches his arm*)

LANCRET

No!

COLUMBINE (*passionately*)

Lancret!

LANCRET

My child,
Would you have had me?

COLUMBINE

Oh, fastidious workman!
'T is that fierce conscience I admire, master,
That tries and burns the creatures of your brain.
'T was just such valiant acts of regal spendthrift
That made me love you first.

WATTEAU

Child!

COLUMBINE

When I saw
Kings could not bribe you — who would never send
A painting scourged by your own soul's reproach,
To strut before an applauding public — then
I saw Watteau and loved him.

WATTEAU

Woman! Woman!
Weave on.

COLUMBINE

Watteau, you know how I desire
The world for you. Oh, win it royally
With no concessions. I am shy of him
That stoops to please — a court.

WATTEAU

I see. I see.
Oh, Columbine, you are a simple version
Of a mysterious tale whose magic thought
In words one syllabled is written large
In a child's primer.

COLUMBINE

'T was a god I loved.

WATTEAU

Or rather, the Court Painter.

COLUMBINE

Court Painter? No!
I know him not. But Watteau, scornful, splendid,
In rags, half famished, with the eyes that look
Through, through — till I feel helpless as the air,
Transparent, simple —

WATTEAU

Simple as the air,
But yet — how subtle!

COLUMBINE

Now you have grown precious
Of work you value not. Like other men!
How I should love you if with one bold stroke —
But men are cowards. Yet I would have you brave!
Watteau — I promise. If you lose it all,
The Court, the favor, here is Columbine!
Yours, yours! All yours!

WATTEAU

I will not take your promise.
I have given you so much. Take back the word
By my free gift that otherwise your hand
Will filch from my soul's casket — when all 's done.
Helplessly intricate! And yet so plain —
As complex things all are when once they are learned.
You are not simple enough to evade my wit
Even though 't is slow. I give you back your word,
One truth — in spite of you — as one would give
To a child a priceless gift he values not —
In case you should go up to it — and bewail
How little you have of honor. Now all 's plain.
And I 'll lose all, and you shall pledge your faith
To the Court Painter. Lancret — here 's the brush. (*Pointing to his own portrait*)
Now blot it out.

LANCRET

I will not.

WATTEAU

Columbine?

COLUMBINE

No! No! I dare not.

WATTEAU

What — are you afraid?

COLUMBINE

Let only him destroy it who has made.

WATTEAU

Oh, Columbine! God made you for the truth!
You are so explicit. Wherefore weave and weave —
So obvious, so cunning! Ask me straight
For the thing you want of me. Let 's have the truth.
Give me but that. Just for a moment lay
Your soul whole in my hands in a plain speech.
Be just for once clear and articulate,
Out of God's mouth as when he spoke you first,
So I may hear your music. Say, " Watteau,
I love this boy here, and I would have
The world for him and me. The world, Watteau,
That means so much to us and is to you —
Well — treasure also. Pray you give it me."

COLUMBINE

You do mistake. I do not want the world.

WATTEAU

Why, then, you almost spoil my faith in God,
Who, being perfect, let his hand go astray
And spoiled you in the making. Was it so hard
To fashion you more smoothly? Wherefore break us
To such discredit? Maker of us all,
We do beseech Thee for a perfectness.
Oh, Architect of sighs, doubt, and disgust,
Builder of broken bodies and of souls
That bear the blemish of Thy hand, — no, no,
I will not think upon the bruisèd world,
That like the serpent shines beneath Thy heel,
Accursed and beautiful, afflicted, fair,
Bright and vindictive. Rather will I set
My hand to make perfection — if I may.
Be perfect as you are fair. Say, "Give it me."
Come, speak the words! You will not, even so?
How I desire this honor for you, child.
Is it so hard? What, even as a gift
Bought with no purchase money of your own
But my own blood?

COLUMBINE

I pray you, give it me.

(WATTEAU *dashes out the face of the portrait with his brush*)

WATTEAU

Vanitas vanitatum! Let it pass.

[*A* PAGE *enters*]

PAGE

The queen.

[QUEEN *enters with her* LADY-IN-WAITING]

QUEEN

Monsieur Watteau, I come at last
To see my portrait.
(*She pauses before* LANCRET'S *painting*)
It is changed.

WATTEAU

Yes, madam.

QUEEN

How different! Yet — I congratulate you.
That touch! How full of you!

THE LADY

Your majesty,
The likeness is most perfect.

QUEEN

Watteau? yourself?
Does it give you pleasure, sir?

WATTEAU

It is well done.

QUEEN

That bold technique! A real Watteau!

WATTEAU

No, madam.

QUEEN

What do you mean?

WATTEAU

'T was not my hand that did it.
Lancret, a friend.
(*Points to his own painting*)
There, madam, is my portrait.
A real Watteau.

QUEEN

What, sir, would you insult me?
Blot out my likeness!

LANCRET

Madam, pardon me.
He compliments you. To his fastidious taste
It was not worthy of you.

COLUMBINE

Lancret!

LANCRET

Dear madam,
Genius is whimsical. In its own ways
It praises or dispraises. 'T was a dream —
Perfection — took the breath with loveliness.
Unheard of beauty! To his fastidious taste
It was not worthy of you.

QUEEN

Watteau, Watteau!
That was a savage compliment. But still —
Luxembourg waits for you. The Sistine Chapel
Is restless for angels and the great Madonna
I bid you paint there.

WATTEAU (*holding out the slippers*)

Madam, upon these
I have drawn that great Madonna.

QUEEN (*taking the shoes*)

Satin slippers!
What butterflies!

THE LADY

What wreaths!

QUEEN

What pretty Cupids.

WATTEAU

I painted a Madonna on the sole.

(QUEEN *turns them over*)

QUEEN

A Madonna! 'T is a wonder.

WATTEAU

Madam — I spent
The dreams of many days and wakeful nights
Upon that little shoe.

QUEEN

But this is spendthrift!
One promenade upon a velvet carpet
Would spoil the glory of it.

WATTEAU

Therefore, madam,
I wrought them as they are.

QUEEN

They are just my size.

WATTEAU

The smallest shoe in the kingdom.

QUEEN

I 'll try them on.

WATTEAU

Pardon me, madam.

QUEEN

So —

THE LADY

Monsieur is honored.
May I suggest thrice blessed is that man
That makes the queen a welcome gift?

QUEEN

And why?

WATTEAU

They are not meant for — this.

QUEEN

I see! I see!

(*Reaching him her purse*)

Well, Monsieur Watteau — was it meant for this?

WATTEAU

No, madam.

QUEEN

Nay — but, man, 't is the queen's purse,
With a thousand francs.

WATTEAU

About this little shoe
Is the sweet savor of my midnight dreams.

QUEEN

I triple it.

WATTEAU (*holding shoe*)

Oh, perfect only thing
That making I have loved, fragile and fair,
I 'll keep you — so.

QUEEN

But I will have it! Sir —
Five thousand francs.

WATTEAU (*fondling shoes*)

Sweet dream.

QUEEN

Then twenty thousand!

WATTEAU

I hear the Cupids play their little harps.

QUEEN

Is this another compliment, Watteau?
It savors of insult, like the other. Nay —
A fortune! Name your price!

WATTEAU

Never — though I
Am hounded with debts clean to the very door
Of the debtor's prison.

QUEEN

Oh, I hate this man!
Give me the shoe. I say — the shoe I 'll have.
A title — would you? Why — do you not know

What 't is to raise the enmity of queens?
Down, down, you dog! And lick my hand! A duke,
This will I make you.

WATTEAU (*with a smile*)

Ah?

QUEEN

Does he not hear?
Sir — I command you. What, would you be hanged?
I 'll move the powers of Heaven and Earth and Hell
To get these slippers. What I want, I 'll have.
You will not take rewards? Then I will strike.
I banish you from court. Our doors in vain
Shall plead for the wings of angels. Not a dream
Of Watteau's shall come true about the walls
Of the Sistine Chapel. Go and face despair,
Hunger and cold, imprisonment, disaster,
Even as of old before I favored you,
Dependent! Slave! That shall be scourged indeed
By my own hand! Do you deny your queen?
Sell me the shoes — or I will ruin you!

WATTEAU

You cannot pay their price!

QUEEN

I cannot? What?
Have I not coffers of gold, rich diadems,
Worth a king's ransom, fit to buy my whims?
Is France so poor?

WATTEAU

Ah, Lady, give me then
That gold whereof the streets of Heaven are made,
On which the steps of angels fall as sweet
As silver rain over a shining air,
You cannot buy from me these shoes, Oh, Queen!
France is so poor.

QUEEN

Ah, now, I see! I see!
Artist — and poet! Such folk must be paid
In magic coin. You are intricate
With your strange courtesies of finer worlds.
Forgive me, sir, that am but a Queen on Earth—
That small and vulgar province in Great Space.
I am not skilled to the urbanities
Of starry cities — the great gracious ways

Of the far capitals of noble thought.
Pardon the rustic and her bourgeoisie!
She will learn manners. I am rich, Monsieur —
And I will pay, but in more subtle-wise
Than gold or titles. I will give a treasure
Great Kings sigh for in vain. I pray you, sir,
Sell me the shoes — and I will pay — a kiss.

WATTEAU

That, gracious lady, is too much to pay.
I cannot tell my Lord, on the Day of Judgment,
That I have stolen their treasure from Great Kings.

QUEEN

Why, man — I am the queen!

WATTEAU

And I — Watteau.

QUEEN

So. Then I will be mild. I have behaved
Like a child that cried for a star. Is it so high?
But you can give it, like the god you are.
I will not barter. I will beg. Monsieur —
Give me the shoes.

COLUMBINE

Watteau — give me the shoes.

WATTEAU

Oh, Columbine, so spun of sorceries
You could not trust me, even at the end,
But needs must win by guile what I would give!
Ah, child — how fair you are! Take them.
(*Giving her the shoes*)
Thereon
Has breathed my soul. It is my masterpiece.

COLUMBINE

I 'll try them on.
(*Putting one on*)
Oh, see my darling foot!

LANCRET

Watteau — oh, master!

WATTEAU

She is of little worth.
And yet — Lancret — we needs must love her. So?

COLUMBINE (*with both shoes on*)

Ha — ah! I 'm Columbine! But these are shoes
In which to run. My feet feel happy in them.

WATTEAU

They are full of thoughts of you.

COLUMBINE

I feel like flying.

WATTEAU

The wings of the butterflies wrought in the satin
Will bear you up.

COLUMBINE

Oh, how I want to dance!

WATTEAU

You feel the tunes the little cherubs play
Upon their harps. Hush — somebody is crying!
It is the tears of Watteau's lost Madonna.

COURTIN

He 's mad!

COLUMBINE (*dancing and singing*)

Blossoms floating in the wine!
Every one loves Columbine!

WATTEAU

Dance! Dance!

QUEEN

Lancret, come to the court to-morrow.
I make you Painter to the Queen.

COLUMBINE (*victoriously*)

Lancret!

QUEEN

Monsieur Watteau, I bid you an adieu.
(*She and her Lady sweep to the door*)
I go from your door. But when I go, monsieur,
Hunger and Desolation and Despair
Shall enter in. I pray you, see this man,
Who better loves a foolish Columbine
Than a Madonna! When the centuries
Shall loose their tongues on him, their speech shall be
Monsieur Watteau, great Painter and great Fool.
(*She goes out with her Lady*)

COLUMBINE (*in* LANCRET'S *arms*)

But oh, Lancret, Lancret!

WATTEAU

Dance, Columbine.
Upon those little satin shoes are painted
What made night perfect and on a barren day

Shed light. Dance, dance, as Judith danced of old
With the head of Holofernes.

(COLUMBINE *dances and sings*)

COLUMBINE

Blossoms perish in the snow.
Columbine won't kiss Pierrot!
(*Her dance increases in wildness. Her skirts glitter around her*)

WATTEAU

Oh, whither? Immortality and Fame,
Fortune and High Endeavor sketched thereon!

COLUMBINE (*singing*)

Blossoms fade and we forget,
She was fairer than Pierrette!

WATTEAU

Whither? ye flowering wreaths and little Cupids,
That play through satin all your subtle tunes?
Oh, whither? roses! whither? butterflies!
Dance — dance!

(COLUMBINE *sings and dances*)

COLUMBINE

Blossoms lead the April in,
Columbine flounced Harlequin.

WATTEAU

Whither? oh, heart of Watteau, wrought among
The blossoming wreaths and all ye precious
dreams
That made it golden! Rushing of vague wings,
Haloes and tears of Mary — all of these
That shone in it so long. Dance!

COLUMBINE (*faltering*)

I am tired!
And — oh, Watteau!

WATTEAU

Dance! dance! I bid you dance!
(*She dances again, more passionately than ever*)
Forever and forever! O Virgin Mary! —
Dance! dance! Convey my visions to the dust.
Efface my dreams in darkness. Oh, the mad whirl
In which they all go out! Dance them away —
Even to destruction and to utter death.

THE RIDERS

But if I ride with you to-night,
Will you bring me back by early light?
(Ride, quoth he.)
How can I leave my days of balm,
My perfumed, sweet, enchanted calm?
The old life holds me like a charm.
(Ride, quoth he.)

My tranquil days are cool and fair,
I stitch my seam and plait my hair,
(Ride, quoth he.)
My broideries are silken fine!
Oh, look, beneath this hand of mine,
Creep yellow grapes and muscadine,
And painted faces through them shine,
And golden flagons for the wine —
But yet I sicken, I fail, I pine.
(Ride, quoth he.)

Of innocence I am the daughter.
(Ride, quoth he.)
Soft as a lily under water
(Ride, quoth he.)

I poise all day beneath a stream!
Sometimes a wandering face will gleam,
Hover aloft and pass and beam,
Looking a moment in the stream,
Or I hear voices in a dream,
While I swing limpidly under the water!
Soft and slow is time to me —
Of innocence the snow-white daughter!
(Ride, quoth he.)

I have dashed my brow against a stone
That I might see the stars at noon,
(Ride, quoth he.)
For I have not seen the face of night —
I sit at dusk by candle light
In a small chamber, clean and white!
(Ride, quoth he.)

Will you take me to the strange black town
Where rushing men heave up and down?
(Ride, quoth he.)
I am so terribly alone!
I want their bread that is not my own.
I will eat thereof though it be but stone!
(Ride, quoth he.)

Will you take me up to the top of the steeple
From which the Devil showed the people?
(Ride, quoth he.)
Those kingdoms whirl like scarlet sand
Blown at sunset across the land!
I would catch the red dust in my hand!
(Ride, quoth he.)

Will you take me through the flames of Hell?
If it burns as bright as I 've heard tell
(Ride, quoth he.)
I would fain be burned, so chill I go
As a dreaming wraith of pure, cold snow!
On a blast of fire my soul would blow!
(Ride, quoth he.)

Will you take my soul to Paradise?
Warm with its lovely sight my eyes?
(Ride, quoth he.)
Where two vast angels are spread abroad,
And none shall pass them, saith the Lord!
But I will take to my breast the sword.
(Ride, quoth he.)

Will you take me up to Heaven's gate?
The angels will lend me a robe of state!
(Ride, quoth he.)

Wonderful garments manifold!
I would dance before them in garb of gold,
And the strong great angels, wise and old,
Would laugh to see me leap so bold!
(Ride, quoth he.)

Will you take me through the wind and fire
To the land I know not but desire?
(Ride, quoth he.)
Where stinging tears they all must weep,
Like cataracts their souls shall leap!
Where grief is deep and joy is deep
And smooth as ivory is sleep!
(Ride, quoth he.)

Strange times have galloped through my mood!
(Ride, quoth he.)
Old cities dance along my blood!
(Ride, quoth he.)
'T is Sodom has an adder's tongue —
But oh, what songs has Venice sung!
With piercing Troy have I been stung,
Gomorrah through my heart has swung!
'T was so with Christ when he was young!
(Ride, quoth he.)

Mother, I ride with him to-night!
"*My child, you shall not leave my sight!*"
(Ride, quoth he.)
But through the dark they rode away!.
Whither they went let angels say.
They both came back at the break of day.
(Ride, quoth he.)

When she came back her breast was torn,
The sweetness from her lips was worn.
(Ride, quoth he.)
Her hands were pitiful with scars!
They came from plucking at old wars
That rocked through Hell like meteors.
(Ride, quoth he.)

Her breast was wounded with the sword
That keeps the garden of the Lord.
(Grieve! quoth he.)
But underneath her cloak of brown
Were pale glints of a golden gown.
(Shine! quoth he.)
This way, that way, wisdom lies.
She had eaten the fruit and was made wise.
Now in her calm and smiling eyes
Laughed the flowers of Paradise!
(Peace, quoth he.)

WHILE LOVELINESS GOES BY

Sometimes when all the world seems gray and dun
And nothing beautiful, a voice will cry,
" Look out, look out ! Angels are drawing nigh ! "
Then my slow burdens leave me, one by one,
And swiftly does my heart arise and run
Even like a child, while loveliness goes by —
And common folk seem children of the sky,
And common things seem shapèd of the sun.
Oh, pitiful ! that I who love them, must
So soon perceive their shining garments fade !
And slowly, slowly, from my eyes of trust
Their flaming banners sink into a shade !
While this earth's sunshine seems the golden dust
Slow settling from that radiant cavalcade.

SWEET WEARINESS

Fatigue itself may be a pleasant thing
And weariness be silken, soft and fine!
Upon my eyes its little vapors shine,
Trailing me softly like a colored wing!
Tender as when belovèd voices sing
It steals upon me and with touch divine
Lulls all my senses till each thought of mine
Is hushed to quiet, unremembering.
Oh, weariness thrice dear, so frailly spun
Of ended pleasure that still shines and glows;
Oh, weariness, thrice dear! What have I done
To earn this delicate and deep repose?
Child, thou hast worshiped at the setting sun
And looked long, long, upon the opening rose.

THE WOUND

WOUNDED am I, yet happier — happier far
Than they who have not felt the precious sting!
Poor feet that bleed not with this wandering!
Poor hands that burn not, plucking at a star!
Poor hearts unblessed and whole! I bear the scar
Of a too piercing loveliness. The thing
Hung out of reach I touched, and now I sing
Mad with delight, more blessed than others are.
For since the blushing and ethereal hour
When loveliness upon my heart was born,
When I was stricken by her magic power,
I run — I run — wild, ecstasied, forlorn,
For beauty, when I go to pluck her flower,
Pierces my willing bosom with a thorn.

A SONNET FOR THE EARTH

When I am weary for delight and spent,
Even as a bird that tries too long its wings
Will nest awhile amid the grass and sings,
So I drop downward from the wonderment
Of timelessness and space, in which were blent
The wind, the sunshine and the wanderings
Of all the planets — to the little things
That are my grass and flowers and am content.

Or if in flight my wings should beat so far
From the kind grass that is so cool and deep
That it must poise among the winds on high —
Yet will I sing to thee from star to star,
Piercing thy sunshine, and will always keep
A song for thee amid the farthest sky.

MY FOOLISH DEEDS

When I, before the altars of repose,
Invited Slumber, she refused to stay,
But with a broken heart she turned away,
Astonished quite. Among the flaunting shows
That circled round, she perished like a rose
Cast among flames. Oh, bring her back — I pray!
Then sternly to my heart a voice said, "Nay,
Thou canst not have her — tearfully she goes."

God might not join us, — for gorgeous, bright,
Adorned, conspicuous, sure, without disguise,
Strangely illumined with derisive light
They danced — they danced! Oh, then I was
made wise!
My foolish deeds, flaming before my eyes,
Denied me slumber all the livelong night.

SONNETS FOR NEW YORK CITY

I

NEW YORK AT SUNRISE

When with her clouds the early dawn illumes
Our doubtful streets, wistful they grow and mild;
As if a sleeping soul grew happy and smiled,
The whole dark city radiantly blooms.
Pale spires lift their hands above the glooms
Like a resurrection, delicately wild,
And flushed with slumber like a little child,
Under a mist, shines forth the innocent Tombs.
Thus have I seen it from a casement high.
As unsubstantial as a dream it grows.
Is this Manhattan, virginal and shy,
That in a cloud so rapturously glows?
Ethereal, frail, and like an opening rose,
I see my city with an enlightened eye.

II

A POLITICAL "BOSS"

Has he no country? Is he of alien breed?
Is this land not his home? Oh, exiled one!
Stranger to his own kind, where does he run?
How he has shamed us, for the world to read!
Oh, carrion, prowling where this people bleed,
Grown fat upon disaster, hide from the sun!
A scornful nation asks, what has he done
With the public trust, the honor, and the need.
Not him with glorious hand will we indite,
Patriot, Statesman, in the Hall of Fame,
Nor will we let him flee into the night
Of safe oblivion! But oh — that name
For our sons' sons a moving hand shall write
In scarlet letters on the walls of Shame.

III

SHAME ON THEE, O MANHATTAN

SHAME on thee, O Manhattan, whom I love!
And shame on me that I have slept away
So many years while thy feet went astray!
O Thou — that should'st be white as any dove,
Thou Scarlet Woman! Is there no voice to move —
No hand to smite us? Even for this I pray —
Some terrible scourging that we have let the day
Darken around us while we saw thee rove.
Last night I heard thee cry. Thy wandering feet
Went bleeding by me. On thy ruined breast
I saw thee nurse a feeding child of flame!
Desolate, gorgeous, frantic along the street!
Ah, how I blushed in the dark that through my rest
I felt the burning garments of thy shame.

IV

THE FOUNTAIN OF LIFE

This day into the fields my steps are led.
I cannot heal me there! Row after row,
Thousands of daisies radiantly blow.
They have not brought from Heaven my daily bread!
But they are like a prayer too often said.
I have forgot their meaning, and I go
From the cold rubric of their gold and snow,
And the calm ritual, all uncomforted.
I want the faces! faces! remote and pale,
That surge along the city streets! The flood
Of reckless ones, haggard and spent and frail,
Excited, hungry! In this other mood
'T is not the words of the faith for which I ail,
But to plunge in the fountain of its living blood.

TO A NEW YORK SHOP-GIRL DRESSED FOR SUNDAY

To-day I saw the shop-girl go
Down gay Broadway to meet her beau.

Conspicuous, splendid, conscious, sweet,
She spread abroad and took the street.

And all that niceness would forbid,
Superb, she smiled upon and did.

Let other girls, whose happier days
Preserve the perfume of their ways,

Go modestly. The passing hour
Adds splendor to their opening flower.

But from this child too swift a doom
Must steal her prettiness and bloom,

Toil and weariness hide the grace
That pleads a moment from her face.

So blame her not if for a day
She flaunts her glories while she may.

She half perceives, half understands,
Snatching her gifts with both her hands.

The little strut beneath the skirt
That lags neglected in the dirt,

The indolent swagger down the street —
Who can condemn such happy feet!

Innocent! vulgar — that 's the truth!
Yet with the darling wiles of youth!

The bright, self-conscious eyes that stare
With such hauteur, beneath such hair!
Perhaps the men will find me fair!

Charming and charmed, flippant, arrayed,
Fluttered and foolish, proud, displayed,
Infinite pathos of parade!

The bangles and the narrowed waist —
The tinseled boa — forgive the taste!
Oh, the starved nights she gave for that,
And bartered bread to buy her hat!

She flows before the reproachful sage
And begs her woman's heritage.

Dear child, with the defiant eyes,
Insolent with the half surmise
We do not quite admire, I know
How foresight frowns on this vain show!

And judgment, wearily sad, may see
No grace in such frivolity.

Yet which of us was ever bold
To worship Beauty, hungry and cold!

Scorn famine down, proudly expressed
Apostle to what things are best.

Let him who starves to buy the food
For his soul's comfort find her good,

Nor chide the frills and furbelows
That are the prettiest things she knows.

Poet and prophet in God's eyes
Make no more perfect sacrifice.

Who knows before what inner shrine
She eats with them the bread and wine?

Poor waif! One of the sacred few
That madly sought the best they knew!

Dear — let me lean my cheek to-night
Close, close to yours. Ah, that is right.

How warm and near! At last I see
One beauty shines for thee and me.

So let us love and understand —
Whose hearts are hidden in God's hand.

And we will cherish your brief Spring
And all its fragile flowering.

God loves all prettiness, and on this
Surely his angels lay their kiss.

FORGETFULNESS

She was so recent. She had not yet learned
The sweet observances that make their days
Beautiful to the angels. She went dim
Among their shining, and unoccupied
Wistfully watched their pastimes. Then came one
Who brought a fruit.
"Eat thou," the splendor said.
"I will not eat," said she.
For in his eyes
She saw forgetfulness and was afraid.

Then to her love on earth an angel came.
"We cannot heal her of her listlessness
Nor teach her the new ways, and memory
Grieves her with tears. She will not eat the fruit
That makes us wise and shows us to forget."

Dark is the road that leads to Heaven for one
Who is not dead. No angel goes with him.
Blind and with torn, vague feet and all alone
He came among them. Through the shining place

They saw him rush and saw the scarlet blood
Drip through the brightness. To his Love he
came,
And, lifting in his haggard hands her cheek,
He kissed her on the mouth and showed the
fruit
The Angel brought him — terrible and sweet.

"Eat, Love," he said.
And she, that loved him, ate.
Then smiled at him with unremembering eyes,
And with her heavenly comrades turned away.
With bleeding feet back to the earth he came,
And through the barren days remembered her.

THE PURITAN

The Preacher in his seat
Spoke a new word to-day.
He shook the rock beneath my feet
And left uncertain clay.

His tale was all of ease,
Of tenderness alone.
He was not there when Moses struck
A water from a stone.

Could I but speak the word,
The skies should not let fall
Celestial honey on my lips
When they had need of gall.

He preached a silken word
To fearful men and vain.
They want the sweet dews of our Lord
But not the hurricane.

I 'll have Him all in all —
Beneath His feet be cast!
I have a heart that can endure
The glory of the blast!

Upon His breast like John
They would escape His rod.
But I would sweat as Jacob did
And wrestle with my God.

They are confused, perplexed!
They say there is no sin.
That Hand that fashioned Paradise
Did slip the serpent in.

They are afraid of Death,
I scorn their fluttering brood.
Why I could die with a great laugh,
Declaring that 't was good!

They say these things are dreams!
Truly, they say not well.
For that Pale Horse John tells about
Was driven by Death and Hell!

Let others love the Lamb,
And seek a gentle Lord.
I better like that honest God
That came to bring a sword.

I have no love of ease!
My feet are shod with might!

If there 's no Devil in God's world
Then what have I to fight?

I am a man of war!
Such things I understand:
When Devils against Cherubim
Are leagued throughout the land.

The fragile and the small
In happy gardens wait.
But with the Angels of God's wrath
I will ride out in state.

The frail shall sit and feast;
Behind safe walls are they.
Outside I 'll face the hounds of dread
And hold its dogs at bay.

When scarlet Hell heaves up
I have no fear at all.
Scarred, I beat back the advancing flames
That threaten their good wall.

They tell me that in Heaven
Our Lord will turn to love,
Calling the lambs about His knees
And to His breast the dove.

Unto each man his lust!
These words He speaks to me —
"*I have set thee on a neighing horse,*
For I have need of thee!"

THE JOURNEY

Some there are that melt and meet
With all Eden in their eyes.
Irised loves that flame and beat
Shine as sweet as Paradise.
And they look and they know
And they glimmer and they flow
Like a murmuring in the water
Or a melting in the snow;
Delicately they come near,
And the knowledge in their eyes
Leaves not any doubt or fear,
For wise Eden makes them wise.

Through the flood and through the flame,
Hostile roads of no delight,
Girt with bitterness and shame
Still our spirits came aright.
And I knew thee but to doubt,
And thy hatred found me out
Like a blindness all about
And a thunder in the night.
Still our bleeding feet would run
When our spirits bade them stay,

Destined for no other one,
Doomed to tread no other way.

If some other heart than mine
Housed thee for a dream or two,
If before some alien shrine
Any prayer of thine came true,
If She broke with thee the bread
While I went uncomforted,
I will love those hands that fed
Visions to the soul of you.
Dreams of beautiful and rare
I 'll not envy nor gainsay.
If her kiss has kept thee fair
I 'll not wear that kiss away.

Love — thou knowest for a while
How He kept my heart in his!
Then I learned from out his smile
Love's guile and its mysteries.
Strange that his soul's lips should teach
Unto mine the silvering speech
That we talk now, each to each,
Singing words
That have flown beyond his reach
Like homing birds.
Dear, thy feast was spread so late!

And He bade my heart inside.
I was hungry and I ate —
Had I not, I should have died.

Now we meet and now we know.
Yet — 't is all so strange a thing —
When we love each other so
We cannot forego love's sting!
Still our splendid sorrows shine,
And the bleeding pageant goes,
Swinging through thy heart and mine,
Of innumerable woes.

With my head upon thy breast
Still I fight thee and contend.
And those wounds disturb my rest
That you gave my heart, — O Friend.
They that love in lesser ways
Lesser toils their love may prove.
But we would not rid our days
Of the doubts through which we rove;
Would not give, for all their flowers,
And their golden, perfumed showers,
This great grievous love of ours
And the solemn wars of love.

By our hearts that shall outlast
All the storm and stress of men,

By the dark ways of our past
And the wounds that grieved us then,
By the doubts through which we bled
By the faith that comforted,
By that love that leaves us dead,
Love shall raise us up again.

THE RETURN

Now what have I brought from those brave lists?
Love, what have I brought to thee?
A scanty fame and my great shame
That thou wast there to see.

I bring thee only a broken sword
And a broken heart in me!
More strong than I the war rushed by.
Yet, Love, I fought for thee.

Maids not so fair have better knights
Goodly and brave to see.
I would not have thee pitied of them
If thou shouldst mate with me.

So bid me hence, my own true love!
There 's such scant worth in me!
For from the fray I fought this day
I bring but wounds to thee!

Then up and spoke my own true maid!
Fairest of all was she!
"Let each one go with the one she loves!
Dear love — I love but thee!"

KNOWLEDGE

Once I thought that healing came
From the angels' wings.
Now the bruisèd hands of men
Seem the kindest things.

Once I thought to pluck and eat
The fruit of Paradise.
Now I break with these their bread
With unsaddened eyes.

Once I thought to find on earth
Love, perfect and complete.
Now I know it carries wounds
In its hands and feet.

THE ROAD OF SLEEP

He seems by day so strong, so gay!
All day we laugh and sing:
This morning he said, "My last night's sleep
Was such a pleasant thing."

Yet all the night and all the night
I thought I heard him cry,
"My soul has got a bitter wound!
Love, help me or I die."

I laid my hand on him and cried,
"Love, did you call on me?"
"You waked me from a pleasant sleep,
Heart of my heart," said he.

Oh, whither leads that road of sleep
Down which we fare alone?
There was never a dream in all the night
Could show where he was gone.

Some wound he may not feel at all
Because it lies too deep,
With a loud voice cried out on me!
I heard it in my sleep.

What strange things happen in thee, O Sleep!
Last night I heard him cry,
"My soul has got a bitter wound!
Love, help me or I die!"

SPRING SONG

Now I am made strange again
With the old-time wildness.
Spring, that loves the hearts of men,
Save me by thy mildness.
Nay, thou art not mild!
Thou art not any child.
Untamed art thou and swift to run,
Exquisite — savage as the sun.
A golden beast, in jungles of warm air
I make my natural lair.
Last night, in forests of the wind
I kept my watch and ranged.
With haughty eyes I viewed my kind,
Magnificent, estranged.

We are not gentle in our mood
When the great Spring takes our blood,
But passionate and fretful,
And of mankind forgetful.
'T is then we must be free!
The daughter of the sky and wood,
Let no one lay a hand on me.
Nay, touch me not in Spring!
Hardly look my way!

A glance is such a heavy thing, —
I need no friends to-day !
In Summer maybe I 'll grow still
And bide because I love.
There 's no will now save my will,
My soul is fain to rove.

Always with the Spring
Comes the thought of journeying,
Mixed with the subtlest languor
That would advise me to the ground
Thereon to lie as soft as sound
That in its bosom stirs.
And so I do, — until at length
Grown primitive with anger
That has no source save youth and joy and strength,
I run and shout 'twixt earth and sky,
And fling them from me and defy.

Being in need of prey,
Made boastful with the Spring one day,
To the granite rock that stood my way,
" Bubble, bubble, blue and gray,"
Quoth I ;
" If I should touch you with my hand,
How you would quiver from the land !

I could make earth, sky, and seas
Tremble from me like the breeze."
Then everything grew soft and fair
Breathed out of visible air;
And then, because I loved it so,
I let the whole earth shine and grow.

IN A VISION OF THE NIGHT

SCENE: *A garden lit with moonlight. Enter* THE LADY, *followed by* NANON.

THE LADY

My chamber is so hot, I cannot rest.
And when I wake, I needs must think. Nanon,
I 'll lie here in the cool and sleep awhile,
If sleep may come. Nanon!

NANON

Dear Lady, yes.

THE LADY

Go get your lute and charm my slumber, lest
It bring me dreams that should not visit me.
[*Exit* NANON]
In visions of the night— !
Oh if my thoughts
Strayed from my lord and master, unto him
I must not touch — not even in a dream —
And lingered with him! I am afraid! For
thoughts
Do presage acts. I dare not think of him!

For thinking — I must see! And if I see —
Oh Heaven, be merciful to me! I say
That women are as helpless, soft and strange,
As the frail water clinging upon stone —
A comfort in the noonday and at night
A very gentle solace. They abide
In sweet and delicate ways, and one shall smile,
Saying, "She is with me always." Yet in sooth,
Even while she tarries and makes him sweet and blest,
Her thoughts are from him, woven in a cloud;
For so the wind obtains her dreams and she
Is passing always, not to be detained.

(*She seats herself on the garden bench.* NANON *enters with lute, singing*)

NANON

The way that leads to heart's delight —
It is not very long,
As brief as tears, as quick as smiles,
And ended like a song.
The road that lies to heart's desire
Travels not very far,
There's never a stone, there's never a brier —

THE LADY

I do not like your song.

NANON

It is of love!

THE LADY

Have you no ditty that is soft and cool,
As cool as snow, as soft and still as sleep?

NANON (*singing*)

My thoughts are gathered of thee as the wind
Gathers the mist of the water and so
"*I could dream of thee, an thou hadst the mind,*"
Quoth he in the dark —

THE LADY

Oh peace, Nanon! Have you not any song
Would quiet love as death would quiet woe?

NANON

Oh Lady dear, that song was never sung.

THE LADY

Be quiet, then. I'll sleep. And the good angels
Must guard my dreams.
(*She lies down on the bench*)

NANON (*singing*)

My thoughts are gathered of thee as the wind
Gathers the mist from the water —

(THE LADY *sleeps, and* NANON, *hushing her song, looks over the garden*)

This great night
Wherein all things do sleep, is terrible.
Is there anything happening?

(*She walks away from the sleeping* LADY, *among the trees*)

The air seems full
Of presences that meet and mingle! Oh —
Where are the stars! Peace — peace! Unstable me!

(*Strikes her lute and sings*)

I would have fled — but yet the heavenly powers
Brought back the road to you.
That God that made all love, made this of ours —
But we that share it, oh what shall we do?

(*She thinks she hears a movement and starts back to the garden bench*)

Oh Lady dear — and have you waked so soon?

(*She sees that* THE LADY *slumbers*)

I thought I heard my Lady leave her couch!
What did I see that flitted through the garden?

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Shadows, I think, or else perhaps two lovers
That seek a lonely world of green delight.
Ah — I have sighed and sipped like all the rest,
Feasted and sorrowed, and would do so again!
Ah me — what bliss has taken the midnight air,
What strange old sorrow and what vast despair!

THE LADY (*starting up*)

I dreamed that in a garden I did sit
Where I had sat for centuries, and sang.
I heard his echoing steps sound far away.
He sought for me amid the thick green leaves
And found my hands but could not see my face.
I could not break from him nor did I try,
But crossing the moonlight looked into his eyes,
And looking, read that thing that had to be.
And we passed on and came together where
The night lay softly singing in the green —
And then — Nanon! (*As if in terror.*)

NANON

Oh Lady dear — what now?

THE LADY

Have I been lying quiet all this while?

NANON

Dear Lady, yes.

THE LADY

What happens in the night?

NANON

All still. Nothing abroad save two black shadows
That through the purple darkness I saw flit.

THE LADY

Then go, Nanon, and leave me here alone.
(NANON *goes out and* THE LADY'S *lover enters*)

THE LADY

What are you doing here? This time of night!

HER LOVER

I was roused from sleep. I had so strange a dream.

THE LADY

What? Had you then? I pray you — tell your dream.

HER LOVER

I dreamed that through a garden at dusk I came.

THE LADY

Not that!

HER LOVER

I heard you sing.

THE LADY

I am afraid!
And what came then?

HER LOVER

When I that singing heard
I sought for you amid the thick green leaves.

THE LADY

Oh peace, you babbler of a foolish dream!

HER LOVER

And found your hands but could not see your face.

THE LADY

Oh go! My heart will break. I bid you go!

HER LOVER

And then I saw your face and in your eyes
I read what was to be.

THE LADY

In my eyes? No —
You have forgot! I read that end in yours.

HER LOVER

And we two rose and went together where
We heard the twilight singing in the green.

THE LADY

Wonderful twilight singing in the green!

HER LOVER

And then —

THE LADY

And then, oh sweet! I know it well —

HER LOVER

You know it? —

THE LADY

Let me go! I too did dream.

THE STORM

The wind was a crowd,
  Wet birds were the skies,
I marched laughing aloud
  With the storm in my eyes.

Part beast and part bird,
  A waif of the plain,
My laughter was heard
  With the voice of the rain.

I thought I remembered
  A night long ago
When our hoofs beat the sod
  And we rushed to and fro,

Our flanks steaming hot,
  Rain-driven and warm!
I had almost forgot
  Till I ran with the storm.

I thought I remembered
  Black roads to a star,
When the wind in our pinions
  Beat us up and afar.

How shrill were our cries,
As we flew from the plain!
Oh that road to the skies,
Beaten up by the rain!

The flails of the storm
Beat my soul from its mesh.
It paled like a mist,
Driven out of the flesh.

It flew through the night
To my mother's warm hand,
But I — I was abroad
With the wind and the sand.

Unhuman and strange,
'Twixt the rain and the stone,
I must flutter and range
Through the dark all alone!

The darkness,
The wetness,
The sleekness,
The fatness
Of shapes in the tempest
Submerged, with no name,
As with laughter and shout

And a clapping of hands
I danced in and out
Or clove in the sands.
As straight as the lightning
I struck and I came —
The storm was the thunder,
And I was the flame.

It was thus that I ran
To the House on the Hill,
When the voice of love
Bade the tempest be still.

Then I gathered me back
From the rain and the sand
To the soul held so close
In my mother's warm hand.

TO DUST RETURNING

SCENE: *The palace garden, in the centre of which stands a sun-dial. The* KING, *absorbed in meditation, watches the shadow move across the dial's face. The* COURT FOOL, *a fantastic figure, enters, with a superb air, holding in his hand something which cannot be seen. He is pursued by pages, youths, and maidens of the court.*

CROWD

Fool! Fool!

A YOUTH

He swears that in his hand he holds
The bulwarks of the earth!

A GIRL (*to* KING)

Sire, is it true?

A YOUTH

His hand contains great empires!

A PAGE

Kingdoms!

GIRL

Crowns!

A YOUTH (*to* JESTER)

Prove it! give me a star!

A GIRL (*to* KING)

Oh Sire, he says
That in his hand he holds a power and glory
More great than yours!

A YOUTH (*to* JESTER)

Then grant to us our wishes!

FOOL

Wish! And I 'll grant it!

1ST GIRL

Please, some satin slippers!

FOOL

I have them here!

1ST GIRL

Painted with flying cherubs?

FOOL

With flying cherubs! Lined with sky blue satin!

YOUTH

I want a kingdom!

FOOL

Kingdoms? I have plenty.

2D GIRL

A scarlet bonnet!

3D GIRL

I would like a lover.
In splendid rich apparel! Have you got him?

FOOL

Bonnets and lovers jostle one another.

BOY

I want a war-horse white as milk, and stamping!

1ST CHILD

Some wooden soldiers!

2D CHILD

And a little trumpet!

A PAGE

Glory I want!

FOOL

My hand is full of glory.

OLD MAN

I 'm blind! I want to die!

FOOL

I 've death abundant.

CROWD

A dancing monkey! Jewels! Stars!

FOOL (*addressing the* KING)

And you?

KING (*pointing to the shadow on the dial*)

I want an answer to the creeping shadow
That marks off time.

FOOL (*holding his hand high above his head*)

Look, then! I have the answer
To everything that is. This small right hand
Contains the sum of all desires — the bourne
For which life strives — the solace unto death!
I have more power in this fragile hand
Than kings may covet; all the heritage
Of them that reign — kingdoms and battles,
powers,

Banners and hosts of war, and crowns and thorns,
Aye, and the kings that wear them —

KING

Fool, explain this.

FOOL

Wonderful hand! It is so full of stars
I hardly hold them! It is splashed with scarlet!
Thunders and tumult — these go streaming through it!
A thousand battles rock and riot in it!
Cities are in it — I can hear them breathing —
Kingdoms and crowns, yes, nations have I here!
And hearts! My child, those cherub painted slippers
Are mad in it for dancing! A scarlet bonnet
Flames among fallen cities! I hold the sum
And substance of this world. Oh look! The glory!
I see it trickling out between my fingers!
Easy to capture it! I reached my hand
And scooped up splendor!

CROWD

Give! Oh, show it! Give us!

FOOL

Then take —

(*Lets fall handful of dust*)

KING

It 's dust!

FOOL

What would you have? This world
From dust created, unto dust returns.

A GIRL'S SONG IN THE WILDERNESS

I WOULD not lose one joy nor grief,
No boon that is the world's to give.
The flower and the fading leaf,
Love, let us take them while we live.
Love, let us take them while we live, —
The laughter and the hurrying kiss.
Ah, sweet, 't is all so fugitive,
Never again shall we have this.

They say there is a land, my dear,
Where there is honey, milk, and wine.
But there 's no road could lead me there
Unless thy lips had matched with mine.
Unless thy lips had matched with mine,
If we had lost a single kiss,
In Paradise we should repine.
Never again shall we have this.

In that fair land that smiles afar,
Grow laughing trees of merrier breed,
But where 's a glory, in what star,
Shaped like a coriander seed!
Shaped like a coriander seed!

Gather the manna, take the kiss.
To-morrow brings us more indeed,
Never again shall we have this!

So let us love and touch and kiss
And weep and part and dance and play,
Never again shall we have this
That is a rosy cloud by day!
That is a rosy cloud by day!
A fire at night along the sky!
Love, let us love while yet we may,
Let us be kind before we die!

THE MADONNA OF THE EARTH

I HAVE grown wise with littleness.
The Lord of Might is full of prettiness.
I see the skies
And they are old no more,
But in its infancy all lies
Upon its mother's knee.
Her face I cannot see,
But I can see thy laughter and thy smiles,
Oh innocent heaven, when she sings to thee.
Fluttering faces shine,
All laughter, out of rock and pine.
Prettiness is abroad.
Thou lovest prettiness; dost Thou not, oh Lord?
Since Thou didst make it!
And small round things Thou hast shaped to cunningness.
Of old I thought Thee terrible and far—
Lodged in a star.
But now I know that Thou art near to bless
And that Thy Hand can comfort and caress.

Come, little Lord,
And stroke the pretty water with thy hand.

So small, so fine,
So dainty sweet it is!
Soft stepping, gray, and full of mysteries.
In thy hand hold it —
Love it, enfold it,
Then let it go again!
Why now its voice is multiple as the rain.
A silly water — yet mighty to withstand
Because my child has held it in his Hand.

Oh this new world I never saw before!
Thy world, my baby! Looking through thine eyes
I see such things to pleasure and surprise!
Of yore
'T was but an apple hanging on a tree,
But now I clap my hands with thee!
Wonderful!
Ah how well I see it now!
Beautiful!
Crimson on a gay green bough!
Astonishing!
What art thou?
Whence camest thou?
Thou never wert before!
Canst thou sing?
Is it a bird that flies on a red wing?
My darling, we have seen a marvelous thing.

Oh thou new man!
I look around with thy delighted eyes
And old things have new graces.
And when thou smilest into haggard faces
Old, desolate, overwise, crafty, or full of scorn,
Thou seest another face beneath that one forlorn —
The look of a child;
And no one knew save thou
How it was lurking in the mouth and brow.
Oh I have cried
When in the weary folk that come to thee
I see the small child that they used to be
Take courage, and thinking it time to play,
Steal wistfully out,
And so forget
The unkind tale of death and sin and doubt
That sent them crying —
While thou wilt laugh aloud
To see so many children in a crowd —
Such sweets, such darlings!
Looking with these eyes
I find in all men dearnesses,
Sweet sounds, clearnesses,
That show their souls perfect as water or air.
The smiling earth reveals its secret to me —
I have grown wise,

And knowledge ever making all things fair
Shows me this common earth is Paradise.
Now I will sing thee a song
Of thy little brothers —
All things that haunt the field and wood,
Four-footed, furry, wild, and good!
And there are other loves beside.
Come hither, all ye loves that glide
Among the grasses; shadows of things,
And wonderful thin murmurings,
Memories of clouds lodged in the wings
Of birds at rest from the sky,
Light on the under side of flowers,
The subtly shining air begetting showers,
Gray weeds,
Flying seeds,
And here 's a pebble shapèd round and small,
Pink as a rose,
With its own shadow on the sand,
Which somehow seems as marvelous and grand
As a great mountain's. Ay — no less
It seems to cool us, comfort us, and bless
For this enchanting spell of littleness
Around and over all.
These are thy playmates now —
Flower-fine pebble and the small brown seed.
Say, " I am little with thee! " to the weed,

And to the pebble, " Small and still as thou."
Strange peoples that live in the dust,
Call them up and share thy crust.
Wild folk with fretful eyes,
Ah, how tame that savage lies.
Plaintive folk, no more perplexed,
Play around my child unvexed.
And all the wandering clans of air and light,
And sullen tribes that take by stealth the night,
There 's none so small, bewildered, far,
But that these thy brothers are.

Mother Beast, Mother Beast, with the wild, woeful eyes!
By that same milk by which we feed our young,
And the great peace that we alike have shared
After the bearing —
I bore him not alone,
Not only of the Spirit I got my Son,
But of the remembering flesh whose good, great pains
Did so pierce down into the roots of things
That when I gave him birth
I felt the dark and lamentable earth
Sluggishly bearing stones. I was dissolved
Into a painèd element, and so
I felt stars in me grow.

I rocked with the sea,
Begetting mammoths; old and savage moods,
Birth pangs of animals in secret woods
I felt in me.

Am I not simple and great even as these?
Betwixt the breasts of the brown nourishing earth,
In the hallowed lap betwixt her bosom and knees,
I lie with a great mirth!
Not like a maid, ashamed,
But full of pride
Laughing I spread my breasts for every one
To see them ample, boisterous, and wide,
With the strong earth milk that has nourishèd my Son.
For I was not one woman, I was many,
When Heaven descended to me from above
And like a cloud dropped softly on my breast,
Filled me with rest.
I had no fear before the Holy Ghost,
Freely my soul partook of Paradise.
Tolerable was the glory of thy wing,
Oh thou great Angel — and thy breaking kiss
Was not so perilous to my flesh as this,
The terror of animals and our mortal need

That so possessed me, when,
Living in my body, the thousand hands
of men
Received the stinging seed.

From the remembering flesh that in it bore
The thoughts of old dead peoples and their
dreams
I made thee, O Lord.
From the remembering flesh that cried aloud
With the strong voice of Rahab the harlot's
blood
I created Thee, God.
From the astonished flesh, pitifully wrought
With dreams and angers of despairing Cain,
I made Thee, O Lord.
Out of the sorrowing of wistful Eve
And from the tissue of her smiles and tears
I created Thee — God.
From Adam's tumultuous body, whose lust and
mirth
Danced heavily in him and from the great de-
spair —
I made Thee, O Lord.
Out of the eagerness of boys and girls
That long for kisses in the flower of spring
I created Thee, God.

(*Thou shalt go to the dance in a scarlet robe, my Son.*)
From the flesh of the fool that laughing in his heart
Cried with an empty voice, "There is no God,"
I made Thee, O Lord.
From the wistfulness of animals that die,
From our desire and from our mortal need,
From the prayer we raise and our delight in Thee,
I created Thee, God.
And perished races, rising up in me,
Fashioned thee wildly of my little dust
And breathed upon thy face the image of man,
And created Thee, God.

Thou hast forgotten how thou didst make the world
And how these hands
Did shape the planets. Burning they all have run
Between thy fingers.
Five fingers hast thou, sweet,
The first one says, I want some food.
The second says, A plum is good.
Ah — hadst thou lived remote among the stars,
The Master of us, we had come to hate!
But now thou hast the need of us, and who
Can hurt a thing so helpless and so small!

The third one says, that won't do!
The fourth one hurries on its shoe.
How safe we are, tenderly wrought together!
How still we lie amid the strange sweet weather
That is the hollow of God's hand.
Yet now
My garments change to mine own eyes.
Mellow are they as with the bloom of years.
How long
Have I sat with Thee thus? Is it all time?
Lie still.
Thou hast no grief thy Mother cannot heal.
Yet lo—
Within my garments I hear a sound of woe,
Of sorrow and of everlasting tears.
Sleep Thou!
The fifth one whispers, I'll go see
If an apple's dropped from the apple tree.

LADIES FAIR

Ladies Fair, oh, what are we?
  Fond or foolish or unwise?
That it is our lot to be
  Made more lovely by men's eyes.

If our looks can shine more bright
  It shall be at our own whim.
Let us dwell in native light
  Without any thought of Him.

O my dears, we may not so!
  Beauty comes not by desire!
But how soon we feel it grow
  If they see us and admire.

When our souls in time of flower
  Needs must blossom or repine,
They can wake us in an hour!
  If they love us, how we shine!

Suddenly we hold our breath
  While the trembling beauty grows.
We can feel it underneath,
  And the sunshine lifts the rose!

Though we love you not, forbear!
Be not vexed that heard but nay!
Since your love has kept us fair
As the earth is with the day.

And our souls are robed with dew
In the old and vernal dress,
And we shine and are made new
With your love of loveliness.

Ladies Fair, oh, what are we?
Fond or foolish or unwise?
Still it is our lot to be
Made more lovely by men's eyes!

GRIEVE NOT, LADIES

Oh, grieve not, ladies, if at night
  Ye wake to feel your beauty going.
It was a web of frail delight,
  Inconstant as an April snowing.

In other eyes, in other lands,
  In deep fair pools, new beauty lingers,
But like spent water in your hands
  It runs from your reluctant fingers.

Ye shall not keep the singing lark
  That owes to earlier skies its duty.
Weep not to hear along the dark
  The sound of your departing beauty.

The fine and anguished ear of night
  Is tuned to hear the smallest sorrow.
Oh, wait until the morning light!
  It may not seem so gone to-morrow!

But honey-pale and rosy-red!
  Brief lights that made a little shining!
Beautiful looks about us shed —
  They leave us to the old repining.

Think not the watchful dim despair
Has come to you the first, sweet-hearted!
For oh, the gold in Helen's hair!
And how she cried when that departed!

Perhaps that one that took the most,
The swiftest borrower, wildest spender,
May count, as we would not, the cost —
And grow more true to us and tender.

Happy are we if in his eyes
We see no shadow of forgetting.
Nay — if our star sinks in those skies
We shall not wholly see its setting.

Then let us laugh as do the brooks
That such immortal youth is ours,
If memory keeps for them our looks
As fresh as are the spring-time flowers.

Oh, grieve not, Ladies, if at night
Ye wake, to feel the cold December!
Rather recall the early light
And in your loved one's arms, remember.

THE DESCENDANT AND THE ID

(A MONOLOGUE IN REGARD TO HEREDITY)

ONCE, when the Scholar — in his book, you know,
That talks of Ids and Biophors and so
Makes much rebellious dreaming come and go —

With that great nonchalance of his, my ease
Had interrupted; (Ids! Such things as these!)
I sought myself through earth and fire and
seas;

And found it not — but many things beside;
Behemoth old, Leviathans that ride,
And protoplasm, and jellies of the tide.

Then wandering upward through the solid earth
With its dim sounds, potential rage and mirth,
I faced a dim Forefather of my birth,

And thus addressed Him: "All of you that lie
Safe in the dust or ride along the sky —
Lo, these and these and these! But where
am I?

" Before the day that brought me forth had found
me,
Your subtle raiment wrapped itself around me,
Even when I was not your faint hands had bound
me.

" Thou silent minister of joy and pain,
Weaving a shroud more subtle than the rain
That lingers white along the fallen grain;

" Since thy hands made me — but not fair, not
fine! —
Then at the end some piteous look of thine
Must plead forgiveness for these sins of mine."

Thus did I speak, while that poor face arraigned
me —
" 'T was thy frail spirit in my heart detained me.
Thy thought, wrought strangely in my own, con-
strained me."

For when She leaned to Him in the great bliss
(Oh I were wrong to tell their spirits this —)
All my life's sweetness went to make that kiss!

Now, when I beg them, as my hunger must,
Laughing they lay into my hands of trust
The Dead Sea apple that is full of dust.

How they have bruised me! From this soul of mine
Danced out the vintage and drank up the wine.

For when the master bade them in to sup,
Between hot hands they snatched the golden cup,
Lo — I was in it — and they drank me up.

So I was spent, as wind is among sand,
In solemn splendors of the saraband.

Yet I, condemned by them to such vast leisure,
Can laugh to think of that great storm of pleasure, —
Those mad dead feet that danced so wild a measure.

Those pitying eyes! I will not let them see
How I go frail for want of strength in Thee.
I will not make them shed new tears for me.

Poor eyes that looked on love so many years,
Filled with desire thereof — knowing no fears —
Looking through mine are blinded now with tears.

Poor feet, that once tumultuous would go,
Now wistfully in mine must creep so slow,
I could have run too, but ye said me no.

Poor lips that kissed so much, in such hot haste,
And left me nothing out of so much waste,
How have ye come now to the great distaste!

Rocked in the whirlwind of their son's desires,
Their bosoms blow upon a blast of fires.
Oh, wind of flame that through my melting bone
Blows the white faces of my burning sires.

For they that leave no sons are comforted,
So placidly their downward steps are led
To those vague nations moving in the dust,
Serene, secure, and being dead, are dead!

But these that bore a child shall never be
Delighted with the elements and free.
They make of body and soul their Heaven and Hell,
And they, being dead, shall live again in me.

Last night those melancholy pilgrims came.
Her tender feet were sandaled in a flame
And His soul's raiment was the cloth of shame.

"Feast thou, my son" — but ye have eaten the bread!
"Dance thou, my son" — Ye have broken the pipes, I said.

So through my heart in desolate array —
They pass and pass and are uncomforted.

How strangely woven of their pain and bliss
Is my soul's fabric. I was wrought of this —
Their exquisite and unforgivable kiss.

So of this dual breathing was I made,
Fragile, eternal, wonderful, afraid,
Rapturous, guilty, flaunting and dismayed.

While their thin laughter echoing in my bone
Reminds me that my flesh is not my own.
Hands off, hands off, and let my soul alone!

I cannot blame them for the deed they did,
Bearing in me the small satiric Id —
The reproachful secret in the pyramid.

But I am weary of the hoarded gold,
The woven garments, stained and manifold,
The shames, still scarlet, splendid yet and old.

In all the woven tissue of my doom
What thread is mine? What thread? Wrapped
in a gloom
Strange hands have whirled the pattern from the
loom.

And my young dreams of cloud and fire and star,
Of powers and splendors, shining from afar,
Fade from that web where those dim workers
are.

A metal meant for God — I know not when
My Lord refused me — but the hands of men
Have marked me Cæsar's. Let Cæsar have me,
then.

O Scribe, (that, writing with such bitter tears
Colors the page with his own atmospheres!)
Think not to hide that legend from the years.

The antique tale, erased yet faintly guessed,
Blurs the new writing on the palimpsest.

Heredity, that drives the weak and great,
With hostile lips I kiss thy robes of state.
Such homage wilt thou ask of me, O Fate!

Once when I spread the altar clean and white
And lit thereon a solitary light,
She brushed it out, and left me in the night.

When I would ease me with the wine and bread,
Her hands bestow it, and uncomforted
I ask for God, receiving her instead.

When did that silent priestess enter in,
Her secret ceremonials begin?
She officiates strangely, even unto sin.

Sometimes she turns on me a smiling face
And to my asking heart confers a grace.
How old it is and brought from what old place!

Touched by how many hands! With moods
divine
Burnished how long, so wonderful to shine!
Now given to me — but oh, not mine, not mine!

Strange savor of all virtue! Ancient worth!
How have we pilgrims brought out of the earth
Heirlooms of laughter and an antique mirth.

My heart cries out, amid their fashioning,
"Lord, I am weary! Give me some fresh thing,"
As the earth cries for newness in the spring.

Oh for some thunder that should rush through me!
Some rain to purge me utterly of Thee,
And leave me naked and small, barren and free.

Then I would drift and drive, splendidly bare,
Earnest and simple, choosing all things fair,
Plain as the sunshine, supple as the air.

For what are we but such as they who go
With anxious footsteps hunting to and fro
For a dear comrade, lost amid the show?

I elbowed one that was an empty fool,
Touched a girl's hand, oh, beautiful and cool!
And talked with sage professors from a school.

There was a tent. I heard His voice inside.
So in I went — but at the door espied
The pale snake-charmer, vague and heavy-eyed.

I saw His face afar — oh, brow of flame!
Plain element of Heaven! but when I came
It was the flaunting clown with mouth of shame.

I saw His eyes — but turning, in a cage
Beheld the boar amid the persiflage
Of the light crowd preserve his ancient rage.

I felt His breath — but sullen from his lair
I saw the great vindictive lion stare
In all the solemn grandeurs of despair.

I saw a guise familiar by the gate.
"He brings me some fair news," I cried. Too
late!
There stood a sandwich vendor and I ate.

Into that tent, omnivorous and brown,
I saw the hurrying hordes of them drive down,
Until the huge thing murmured like a town.

Then I, who missed the One I sought for, went.
But as I wandered in bewilderment
My body hummed like that articulate tent.

While traveling with me, many a weary mile,
Amused, satiric, watchful all the while,
Moved the perpetual Scholar, with a smile.

For as I watched the caravan go by,
Strange, yet familiar, came the wonted cry,
"Yes! these and these and these! But where
am I!"

Then spoke that rapt Philosopher, that bore
The little, restless, splendid Biophor.
"Thou art not, truly. Nay, what wouldst thou
more?

"O fretful! foolish! thin and vague and high!
O Egotist! O Modern! With that cry,
Think you to startle time? I—I—I—I!

"What dream hast thou of what thyself might be?
What star, what cloud, what flame is lit in thee?
Bright terrible delusion, fair to see!

" For you that say, with vanity half hid,
'I willed and said and made and had and did' —
Look you, with curious eyes, upon the Id.

" That little Ark, that peopled with a brood
Of dreams, desires, portents, rides the flood,
Rocks on forever through thy wistful blood.

" Behold in it how many lives arrayed!
Wild, hostile, loving, exquisite, afraid,
All living things that God has ever made.

" Here is thy will, thy war, thy heavenly fire,
Thy dust, thy want, thy labor, and thy hire,
The dream, the anger, and the old desire.

" Through this small Id the old barbarians rove,
And ancient hierarchies slowly move —
And kings and clowns and slaves — and hate and
love.

" For what art Thou? Why nothing, friend, at
all —
Except the echo of a reckless call
Or as a simple shadow on a wall.

" For as the fragile cloud accepts the air
Thy thoughts receive their thoughts, and every-
where
They blow thy dreams about. Thou art not there.

"*What Dream hast thou?*" Then through my soul there came
A light that burned through weariness and shame,
The virginal presence of the clean, first flame.

"*What Dream hast thou?*" Then with a heart of trust
I felt the sharp and exquisite swift thrust
Of swords of angels, flashing through the dust.

O fluttering fire! O little pale blue wreath!
O radiant substance, hovering over death!
This, then, is I, made of God's living breath.

And I am new and wonderful and fair!
"*What star, what cloud, what flame?*" The angels share
Even with my heart their breathing of first air!

Apart, above, beneath, beyond, within,
I laugh at this vast heritage of sin.
That God that made me armed my soul to win.

Slowly I feel the ancient custom fall
Like shattered rain from off a steady wall,
And great "*I will*" is stronger than them all.

For if those hordes that terribly must ride
Drive through my heart and leave their grief inside,
God also wanders there at eventide.

Man from the dust and woman from the bone, —
But oh, we were not wrought of these alone!
God, with His Heavenly spirit, breathed thereon.

Last night the old ancestral pageant came,
Bearing the ancient virtue and the shame.
God, in my hand, had written a New Name.

GLADNESS

The world has brought not anything
To make me glad to-day!
The swallow had a broken wing,
And after all my journeying
There was no water in the spring, —
My friend has said me nay.
But yet somehow I needs must sing
As on a luckier day.

Dusk falls as gray as any tear,
There is no hope in sight!
But something in me seems so fair,
That like a star I needs must wear
A safety made of shining air
Between me and the night.
Such inner weavings do I wear
All fashioned of delight!

I need not for these robes of mine
The loveliness of earth,
But happenings remote and fine
Like threads of dreams will blow and
shine

In gossamer and crystalline,
And I was glad from birth.
So even while my eyes repine,
My heart is clothed in mirth.

TO NATURE

I LOVE thee, sweet, because thou art so sure,
Beautiful always. Never a mood of ours
Has touched thine eyes with sorrow. Thou dost endure
Tranquil amid thy sunshine and thy showers,
And thou art rich and delicate and pure,
Serene as Heaven dallying among flowers.

A solace amid woe is this to me,
That though we perish, still the world is fair.
We cannot, by lamenting, darken thee,
Nor with our tears wash out thy beauty rare.
Still shall a violet evening please the sea,
And a pale splendor satisfy the air.

SERVICE

If I could only serve him,
How sweet this life would be.
Last night I dreamed my darling,
Alive, returned to me.

I brought him from the cupboard
The things he liked to eat, —
The little piece of honey,
The rye bread and the meat.

I sang the song he asked for
The night he went away.
How was it, when I loved him,
I could have said him nay !

I took the time to please him,
With a hand upon his brow,
Amid the awful leisure
There was no hurry now.

How strange I once denied him
What took so little while.
A kiss would seem so simple,
So slight a thing a smile.

With pleased sweet looks of wonder
He took what I could give, —
Such words as we deny them
Only because they live.

The pale light of the morning
Shone in upon the wall.
Come back to me, my darling,
And I will give you all.

OH, TELL ME THAT THE BIRD HAS WINGS

Oh, tell me that the bird has wings!
Oh, say the sky is blue!
I think I never knew these things
Till they were said by you.

And yet — I feel as wise, as wise
As a great star may do,
That leans its cheek into the skies!
So must I lean to you.

And yet — as fresh as trees in spring,
As simple as the dew —
I seem to know not anything,
Made innocent with you.

FIRST SIGHT

I WAS born again to-day!
I was fashioned new!
Now my heart is fresh with May
Virginal as dew!

What it was I cannot tell.
Something on my eyes
Exquisitely breathed and fell
And I grew more wise.

Goldenly it breathed and kissed.
Now the world is plain —
All the glories I had missed
In shine and air and rain.

Just a little while before
It was all disguised.
Now the earth seems so much more
That I am surprised.

I could touch and hold and kiss
Everything I see!
Say then, was it always this,
Waiting just for me?

Oh, to think that yesterday
It was shining so!
Yet my poor heart could delay
And my eyes said no!

TO BEAUTY

I WOULD not have thee far away
By whom I must be led.
I needs must have thee every day
To be my meat and bread.

For if there be unlovely things
Wherein no radiance glows,
I 'll kiss them till their folded wings
Shall blossom like the rose!

Oh, be thou beautiful, I 'll say, —
And save me with delight!
Then each dark thing will smile like day
Between me and the night.

I 'll listen till I make them speak,
By need will make them wise!
As love calls blushes to the cheek
Or laughter to the eyes.

For where love lays its trusting kiss
There Beauty needs must be
And so I 'll turn the world to bliss
Until it shines like thee.

THE BLESSÈD HANDS OF SLEEP

I LAY me down with sighs and tears
After a barren day,
Yet every morning I awake
Innocent and gay.

The sunbeams sparkle in my soul
As if 't were bathed in dew!
I feel so simple and surprised,
Exquisite and new!

Little I feel and like a child
With laughter I arise.
This common earth revealed and bright
Shines like Paradise.

Betwixt the blessèd hands of sleep
I lay my heart, and lo!
She heals me of my grief, and now
Merrily I go.

Oh, strange and lovely sleep, that Thou
After a sorrowing day
Canst send me forth like any child,
Innocent and gay!

WHO WON THE DAY

RONSARD, the gay devil, ran under the guns!
He 'd be off if you bade him to pluck at the suns.
Quoth the little Pierrot, "Will you see how he runs!"
He jumped up and down in delight at the show —
"I could do it myself," cried the little Pierrot.

Who won the day?
Phillippe and Landré!
These laughed at the fray!
Bonaparte? No!
Who won the day?
Jacques and Stofflet!
Ronsard and René
And the little Pierrot.

Jacques waved a girl's kerchief high over his head.
"They can see me the better," he merrily said.
Quoth the little Pierrot, "Will he laugh when he 's dead?"
He had only been kissed by his mother, but — "Oh!
I could do it myself!" cried the little Pierrot.

Who won the day?
Phillippe and Landré!
These laughed at the fray!
Bonaparte? No!
Who won the day?
Jacques and Stofflet!
Ronsard and René
And the little Pierrot!

Pierrot laughed aloud. "So little?" says he!
"If the chance is so small the Lord sized it for me!"
They had held the lad back, but he begged to be free.
He cried like a child for his toy, and so
They must needs give his death to the little Pierrot.

Who won the day?
Phillippe and Landré!
These laughed at the fray!
Bonaparte? No!
Who won the day?
Jacques and Stofflet!
Ronsard and René
And the little Pierrot.

THE SLEEP IN GETHSEMANE

Into the dark Christ turned away.
He spoke to the Three and bade them stay.
"Sit ye and watch while I go pray."
O Lord, pity us!

Peter dreamed of a barley cake.
It up and talked when he fain would break.
He laughed in his sleep till his sides 'gan ache!
O Lord, pity us!

James had a dream that his brothers' ass
Fell down dead where the pilgrims pass.
He heaved in his sleep and cried "alas."
O Lord, pity us!

"Nay," quoth John, "but I 'll take no rest!"
He thought that he lay on the Lord Christ's breast,
But it turned to a maid's, that he loved the best.
O Lord, pity us!

Jesus looked upon their shame
When bleeding out of the dusk he came.
Three times over they did the same.
O Lord, pity us!

MAXIMS FOR AN OLD HOUSE

THE HEARTH

God rest you all that linger here,
Though you be strange you still are dear.
Peace to your hearts, if you abide,
Reflect, and give your souls to cheer.

THE HALL

Oh thou, the youngest of this race
Sojourning now in their old place,
Think thou kind thoughts and dream fair
dreams,
For such as this thy line beseems.

THE EAVES

If underneath the quiet eaves
You hear the pushing of vague leaves —
'T is these old beams, remembering
How sweet the forests were in spring.

THE PORCH

I reach abroad my wistful palms,
As beggars cry, " An alms, an alms."
Leave thou some kindliness in me
That these old rooms may better be.

THE BEST ROOM

All they that spent their days in grace
Have left a blessing on this place.
Then gentle be that speech that falls,
Lest ye offend these placid walls.

THE STAIR

She was so young, so light, so fair!
I loved her footfall on the stair,
Her voice fell bright through this dim air.
I would have kept my dear, but she
Like thou — like thou — must pass from me.

THE CHAMBER

I

How intimate and yet how strange!
How calm I am that never change.
All day I think, as I abide,
How many folk have in me died.

II

To sleep, to dream, to smile, to lie
And still dream on as night goes by,
It may be when thy time shall come
It shall not seem more sad to die.

THE DUST

Amid the clinging world I guess
Their subtle hands contrive to bless.
And from this ancient dust I see
Ancestral eyes peer forth at me.

THE KEEPING-ROOM

I

The thorn that by the wayside grows
Comforts the pilgrim with a rose.
Do thou, like him, to charm thy gloom
Perceive the sweetness of this room.

II

If thou perchance shouldst see a face
Smile at thee from an empty space,
Or feel some presence, do not fear,
Those ghosts are kind that loiter here.

III

I met a stranger in this room,
He moved about and seemed at home.
"Good sir," said I, "what dost thou here?"
He turned a pleasant face and said,
"A hundred years have I been dead."

THE THRESHOLD

Ye who have come to such an age
Ye dream of that Great Pilgrimage,
Think not to bid this roof farewell.
Lo! our old smiles shall give you rest
In those new mansions of the blest.

THE PLASTER ON THE CHIMNEY

These words in time shall pass away
And moulder with the mouldering clay.
Learn thou that only passing things
May know the blessedness of wings.

THE COMMON LOT

The sheets on which I rest at night
Are sleepy fine and drowsy white.
Among them are such soft caresses,
And all enchanting sleepinesses.

And when I go to wash my hands
I touch the sweetness of the lands.
What pretty water, swift and shy!
God love my little friend, say I!

The wonderful feeling in my feet
That makes them glad to touch the street,
While through the lanes and market-places
Small happenings assume such graces
The air seems full of smiling faces.
And all the dull, least, common things
Have singing breasts and beating wings.

I let their speech sound in my ear —
The wonderfully small and dear!

They all go singing day and night,
The little children of delight.

The kind and simple shall not say
"We piped to you the livelong day,
But could not get you out to play."

Nay, let me take their shy, small hands
And dance among their innocent bands.

A gray rain lives beneath the eaves,
Green apples grow among green leaves.

Some children in the street let fall
Over our hedge a leather ball.

My feet are glad to touch the ground,
My clean skirt makes a pleasant sound.

If I should go to wash my hands
I should touch the innocence of the lands.

The sheets on which I rest at night
Are sleepy fine and drowsy white.

SONGS FOR MY MOTHER

I

MY MOTHER'S CLOTHES

When I was small, my mother's clothes
All seemed so kind to me!
I hid my face amid the folds
As safe as safe could be.

The gown that she had on
To me seemed shining bright,
For woven in that simple stuff
Were comfort and delight.

Yes, everything she wore
Received my hopes and fears,
And even the garments of her soul
Contained my smiles and tears.

Then softly will I touch
This dress she used to wear.
The old-time comfort lingers yet,
My smiles and tears are there.

A tenderness abides
  Though laid so long away,
And I must kiss their empty folds,
  So comfortable are they.

II

HER HANDS

My mother's hands are cool and fair,
  They can do anything.
Delicate mercies hide them there
  Like flowers in the spring.

When I was small and could not sleep,
  She used to come to me,
And with my cheek upon her hand
  How sure my rest would be.

For everything she ever touched
  Of beautiful or fine,
Their memories living in her hands
  Would warm that sleep of mine.

Her hands remember how they played
  One time in meadow streams, —
And all the flickering song and shade
  Of water took my dreams.

Swift through her haunted fingers pass
Memories of garden things ; —
I dipped my face in flowers and grass
And sounds of hidden wings.

One time she touched the cloud that kissed
Brown pastures bleak and far ; —
I leaned my cheek into a mist
And thought I was a star.

All this was very long ago
And I am grown ; but yet
The hand that lured my slumber so
I never can forget.

For still when drowsiness comes on
It seems so soft and cool,
Shaped happily beneath my cheek,
Hollow and beautiful.

III

HER WORDS

My mother has the prettiest tricks
Of words and words and words.
Her talk comes out as smooth and sleek
As breasts of singing birds.

She shapes her speech all silver fine
Because she loves it so.
And her own eyes begin to shine
To hear her stories grow.

And if she goes to make a call
Or out to take a walk,
We leave our work when she returns
And run to hear her talk.

We had not dreamed these things were so
Of sorrow and of mirth.
Her speech is as a thousand eyes
Through which we see the earth.

God wove a web of loveliness,
Of clouds and stars and birds,
But made not anything at all
So beautiful as words.

They shine around our simple earth
With golden shadowings,
And every common thing they touch
Is exquisite with wings.

There 's nothing poor and nothing small
But is made fair with them.

They are the hands of living faith
That touch the garment's hem.

They are as fair as bloom or air,
They shine like any star,
And I am rich who learned from her
How beautiful they are.

IV

HER STORIES

I always liked to go to bed —
It looked so dear and white.
Besides, my mother used to tell
A story every night.

When other children cried to go
I did not mind at all,
She made such faery pageants grow
Upon the bedroom wall.

The room was full of slumber lights,
Of seas and ships and wings,
Of Holy Grails and swords and knights
And beautiful, kind kings.

And so she wove and wove and wove
Her singing thoughts through mine.

I heard them murmuring through my sleep,
Sweet, audible, and fine.

Beneath my pillow all night long
I heard her stories sing,
So spun through the enchanted sheet
Was their soft shadowing.

Dear custom, stronger than the years —
Then let me not grow dull!
Still every night my bed appears
Friendly and beautiful!

Even now, when I lie down to sleep,
It comes like a caress,
And still somehow my childish heart
Expects a pleasantness.

I find in the remembering sheets
Old stories, told by her,
And they are sweet as rosemary
And dim as lavender.

EVE'S SONG

They may not ever know
By what dark thoughts I go,
What roads lead to and fro
  To that dear place.
But since the day our eyes
Turned from its blessed skies,
I have thrice seen Paradise,
  By God's good grace.

Ay, thrice the angel's sword
Has touched my heart, good Lord.
According to thy word,
  I came by fire,
And thrice those roads of pain
Have broken my soul in twain,
Yet it was not in vain,
  O Heart's Desire.

I

When Adam on his side
Turned heavily and cried,
With laughter had I died
  To make him whole.

My heart was like to break
For that sweet Eden's sake,
Comfort thereof to take
For his poor soul.

Strong rain and bitter wind!
And we were lost and blind.
All this of my frail mind
Was come of me.
But Adam spoke and said,
"Love, I were comforted,
Yes, raised although long dead,
Being near to thee."

(*That place wherein I wait*
Is closed inviolate,
Shut in with the warm state
Of angels' wings.
The trees that flame around
Bear plumes of golden sound,
And like the heart of the ground,
The ground bird sings.)

II

When, as we went forlorn,
My ailing feet were torn
With wound of many a thorn
And grief of the stone,

I knew not any harm
That had his looks for balm,
He healed me with a calm
Shed from his own.

(*Softly the angels there*
Color the atmosphere
As sweet rain takes the air
In time of drouth.
" *Her heart is broken*," *they said*,
" *Yet sings she like the Dead*,
For she has Adam's kiss
Upon her mouth.")

III

When, born to earth and stone,
My Cain fared forth alone,
With no heed to my moan,
In angry-wise,
Like a tree the storm has bent
I rocked, being wholly spent,
Yet by that road I went
To Paradise.

(*No hope*, *nor joy*, *nor fears*,
Laughter, *nor any tears*,
Disturb those silent spheres
Where I abide.

The waning and increase,
God maketh all this cease;
Only a great, good peace —
And naught beside.)

Yes, thrice the angel's sword
Has touched my heart, good Lord.
According to thy word,
I came by fire,
And thrice those roads of pain
Have broken my soul in twain.
Yet it was not in vain,
O Heart's Desire!

THE THEATRE-CURTAIN

What a happy folk are these —
That the artist's hand has wrought
On the curtain, gay as thought —
Light as folly, how they please!
And the play that lived behind
Passes, faint as any wind!
And we have not any mind
Save for these!

Ah — this theatre-curtain! Think awhile
How the faces on it smile!
How they dance,
Glance,
Shine!

Columbine
Leads her sportive pageant in
With Harlequin!
Gay Pierrot!
Sweet Pierrette!
We forget
What 's the show
Till the lights go out, and lo!
Romeo!
And Juliet!

And the motley — gone at last!
All the gay,
Jesting throng
Fled away!
Following after
Went the laughter
And the past
Has their song!

Yet we know they 'll come again —
That is sure!
Strange it is that in this world of men
'T is our laughters that endure!
Only tears shall pass away,
Sorrow vanish, like the play!
When all 's said and done there 'll fall
A healing joy over all!
Even so
Juliet weeps and Romeo
Faints and dies —
While following the voice of woe
Comes the singing of Pierrot,
And the laughter of Pierrette stops the sighs.

Oh, the merriments of earth!
We do well —
When we dance, sing, and smile!
Truly we were made for mirth!

And I love this painted throng!
Glad am I to know that after
This sad play will come the laughter
And the song.
And I thank the hand that wrought
Such delight with such a thought
That the theatre-curtain falls
Bringing joy by the hand,
Singing dancers in a band —
And a voice none can withstand
Calls and calls —
Like a day
In sweet o' June!
I forget the inner breath,
Parting, fear, despair, and death,
And my own feet dance away
To the tune!

Dears, who painted here do dwell —
Flushed and gay, I love you well!
Oh, to bide as one of these!
I could dance as well as they,
Have my laughter and be gay!
And forget the strange old way
So beset with mysteries.

Columbine,
The fine,

And mocking —
Lifts her skirt and shows her stocking!
Sweetheart, fie! And foldero!
Maids and gallants in a row
To the fair!
Oh, what are these whisperings,
Like a sigh that breathes and clings!
If the saddened heart of things
Breaks behind us, who 's to care?
I forswear
Romeo and Juliet!
Rest ye, sweets! I must forget
How ye sorrowed, when Pierrette
Whirls her timbrel in the air,
Dancing down to seek the fair.
How the motley crew comes prancing!
How they whirl and pirouette!
Gay Pierrot,
Sweet Pierrette!
Swiftly glancing!
I forget
Some one sorrowed! Is it so?
Peace, it was so long ago.
Prithee, pipe! And let 's be dancing!
Faith! This world 's a pleasant show!
Dears, I love it! Here we go!
(*But the heart break? Be it so.*)

Hi di di and tripping toe
All the way!
I will kiss thee, one, two, three —
An thou 'lt give but one to me,
And be gay!

(*Romeo,*
Is it thine — this haunting fear?
This despair that breathes so near?
World-old sorrow
What dost thou here?)
'T is to-morrow!
Sweet my dear—
Kiss!
(*Oh, hush thee, Juliet!*)
This —
Pierrette —
Is all I ask!
Motley and a singing mask,
And to forget!

THE PILGRIM

Touch me not, mother, who art thou,
To lay a hand on me?
My soul was driven through sun and moon
Ere I was come to thee!

My soul was blown through the solid earth,
It rode upon the sea,
And the whirling planet brought me forth
Ere I was come to thee.

My feet have traveled by blood, by blood,
That guts a road through the hearts of men.
I lodged me safe beneath their mood
And then drove on again.

Touch me not, mother, for I must burn,
Such ancient fires flame in me!
Frail web that caught a scattered pollen,
I was not born of thee!

I must be strange, for I am far!
Oh, near and far as is the air!
I drank a strong milk out of a star —
For lo! thou wast not there.

Touch me not, mother! I was not held
By pleading, stone, or solid seas,
What is there in Thy wistful flesh
More strong than these?

If Thou came out of the moon and star
I plucked thee forth by my desire.
I can hold thee burning in my hand!
It was my hand that shaped the fire!

If thou didst house thee in the mood
Of folk that perished long ago,
It was the whisper in my blood
That brought thee, whether thou wouldst
or no.

I am more frail than water or stone,
But yet I shall not let thee go!
Thou art my son, and mine alone,
Because I love thee so!

A MOTHER'S SONG

I HAVE not yet known Mother's grief
For I can comfort thee.
Child, I can smile above the tears
So swiftly eased by me.

I know in time my son shall grow
Beyond his Mother's ken.
And half a stranger he will go
Among the world of men.

Then shall I know a Mother's grief—
His separate bitterness.
My heart will break if his must ache
With wounds I cannot guess.

'T is little pain to bear a child
Beside this other woe.
To feel the helplessness to soothe
The want that grieves him so.

(*I hear a man cry in the dark,*
He journeys on alone.)
Lie close, lie close, my little son,
While yet thou art my own.

(*His heart is broken by stranger hands,*
I may not give him rest.)
My darling one, my child, my Son!
I hold thee on my breast.

(*The heart in him is sick with need,*
For help I may not give.)
Perchance the smiles I spend on thee
May help that stranger live.

(*Unhoused, along a barren road,*
I hear a pilgrim weep.)
But in his heart is the little song
That sings thee now to sleep.

(*The bitter brand of this world's shame*
Is sealed upon his brow.)
But in his hand is a New Name —
The kiss I give thee now!

For when my child is grown — is grown —
He 'll get this help from me,
That now, while he is all my own,
I rock him on my knee.

CLOD OF THE EARTH

Clod of the earth, that hardly knows
How the warm sun comes or the cold rain goes,
That lieth dumb and bleak and bare,
It was thy thought begat the rose.

THE DREAMING MAN

" *O Dreaming Man, why dost thou go*
Serene as stars through clouds at night,
As safe as cold is among snow,
Constant as laughter to delight?
What comforts thee and what high charm
Has robed thee in Imperial calm? "

" *O Dreaming Man, across the west*
The darkening shades of night draw nigh."
Brother, who seeks the eternal guest
His sun sinks not in any sky,
Time is ashamed and stars unsure
And seasons pass, but I endure.

" *O Dreaming Man, where are thy tears?* "
Brother, they have no need to fall.
" *You drink not of the bitter years?* "
Brother, I am more strong than all.
I dreamed beyond the moon and sun
I was a great and god-like one.

He sat beneath the radiant trees
That sing like birds, in Paradise.

Since space and time were not of these,
Eternal peace had made him wise.
Upon God's breast, a darling child,
He leaned his happy cheek and smiled.

As the sea spheres its golden hands
About the beauty of the moon,
He held the round earth, the old lands,
The night, the sunrise, and the noon,
The wind, the tide, the shine, the sound,
And time that circled round and round.

And it was built out of his thought,
And it was globed to his desire;
Out of his heart of love he brought
The little lovely ball of fire,
A spherèd flame, a shape of bliss,
Assured and safe he fashioned this.

In that bright place, remote, afar,
He flamed with God upon his throne,
There was not any time nor star
But he could have it for his own.
Seasons and dooms about him crept,
Superb he held the earth and slept.

He dreamed that in a garden place
He knew not anything at all.

Only at dusk he saw God's face,
And Eve shined through the interval.
A little apple pleased his eye —
"The forbidden fruit I eat — and die."

Exquisite with the day and night,
And globular as music is,
And roseate with his delight —
The child of love, it all was his.
The sunset through his fingers streamed
Near to God's heart he slept and dreamed.

He dreamed he was the angry Cain,
Confused and sullen from his birth.
He hid the white face of his slain,
And cursed with it the barren earth.
With solemn rituals of the dead —
"I hate — and serve thee, Lord," he said.

He was as beautiful as Love,
God's hand had fashioned him so fair.
As innocent as is the Dove
He poised and shone in that great air!
Like a white cloud that takes its rest
He slept and dreamed upon God's breast.

He thought that with a mouth of shame
He broke his Master with a kiss,

And oh — the everlasting flame
That shall consume his soul for this.
He swerved like fire from side to side —
" God — I have slain my God ! " he cried.

He was as clean as oceans are,
And like the day-spring he was fair,
And he could dance like any star
Over the highways of broad air.
A splendor from his body streamed,
He held the little earth and dreamed.

He dreamed that as pale foliage dead
His ashen body glimmered white.
Among old bones he broke his bread
Lamenting in the tombs at night.
A piteous outcast barren and lean
He beat his breast and cried " unclean."

God's laws were as the trembling strings
Wherefrom he plucked sweet mellow tones,
And causes, strongest of all things,
Were for his golden paving-stones,
Wild forces, exquisite as birds,
Were tamed by him, and knew his words.

He dreamed he was so frail, so poor,
He could be held by stone and fire,

Yet melting rock could not endure
Before the rod of his desire.
He shut himself into a tomb;
"What hand can raise me from my doom?"

He thought he ran from pole to pole,
And that he delved into the sun,
Unraveled the bright web from a soul,
And found it was not any one.
He ate the grass and bit the sod.
"Ye beasts," he cried, "there is no God."

Yet sometimes, stirring in his sleep,
God's fertile breath upon his eyes,
The splendor makes his dream less deep,
And half he sees his Paradise.
O then, stretched vast beyond the sky,
The sleeper dreams that he is I.

Bright as the silver waters are
That girdle this dark earth around,
As sure as light is to the star,
Or as the silence to the sound —
Wrought fair within and breathed without,
I feel the sleeper all about.

And well I know that I am he —
For I am mightier than I seem.

I am not the shape I look to be;
But I am greater than my dream.
Amid the cloudy dust there shine
High citadels that all are mine.

The caravansary of the days
A moment pitch their tents of light;
Then shadowed take their destined ways
Over the deserts of dark night,
And what black sand down which they went
Remembers how they stretched their tent?

This solid earth is not so stout.
It has a vague and shifting look.
It runs like water all about,
And trembles like the singing brook.
Brightly it slips from out my hand,
The little hour's worth of sand.

When in a vault I once must lie
And rock put on the heavy look,
I saw sweet shapes through substance fly
As sound is woven in a brook.
Bright wandering faces breathed and shone,
And smiling eyes blew through the stone.

When terror takes me by the hair,
I say "'T is but the drift of sleep."

And when distrust shall lay me bare,
I laugh outside, while my eyes weep.
For this which takes my heart to-day,
While happening seems so far away.

When from the dust I seek release,
And my heart cries "I must be free,"
I plunge in that abyss of peace,
That is the greater self of me.
I swing submerged in that great tide,
Whose oceans in my soul abide.

"*O Dreaming Man, how dost thou know?*"
The dawn has touched this sleep of mine.
The vapor wavers to and fro,
And in my plumèd wits there shine
Strange eyes as out of peacock's wings
And they behold great gorgeous things.

Clothed in the scarlet of the skies
At the high feast I sit elate.
The flaming lights of Paradise
Are for my ministers of state.
White powers from my body stream —
I hold the little earth — and dream.

UNDER THE TREES

The wonderful, strong, angelic trees,
With their blowing locks and their bared great knees
And nourishing bosoms, shout all together,
And rush and rock through the glad wild weather.

They are so old they teach me,
With their strong hands they reach me,
Into their breast my soul they take,
And keep me there for wisdom's sake.

They teach me little prayers;
To-day I am their child;
The sweet breath of their innocent airs
Blows through me strange and wild.

So many things they know,
So learnèd with the ebb and flow
By which the seasons come and go.
Still the forefather stands
With unforgetting eyes,
Forever holding in his tranquil hands
The fruit that makes us wise.

So many things they hear,
Whisperings small and dear!
The little lizard has a voice clear,
Squirrel and mole.
A wild and pleasant speech
Our Lord has given to each.
Dear masters, pray you teach
The language of the woodchuck in his hole.
So many things they praise
In earnest, worshipful ways,
The Little Moment and the Ancient of Days.
To one they yield a flower
That blossoms for an hour;
The other they praise with all their singing blood
That they so long have stood.

So many things they love.
The frail ecstatic gnats that move
Like planets whirling in a sky,
These do they lean above
Even like Heaven, while they flame and die.

Here are our neighbors, the good weeds,
And, look you, all the brown industrious seeds
With busy workmanship achieve
Green citadels of grass,
And minarets and domes of shining flowers.

Absorbed and radiant, perpetually they pass.
The little workers with their subtle powers
Lay their foundations in the sod,
While the tree, that knows all from so long ago,
Watches the busy weaving to and fro,
And smiles on them like God.

Now I am brave again,
Strong again and pure.
I have washed my spirit clean of men,
I am established, sure.
I have drunk the waters of delight
From fountains that endure;
Yes, I have bathed my soul
Where the rushing leaves carouse.
I have drunk the air that freely flows
And washes their green boughs.

I never feel afraid
Among the trees;
Of trees are houses made;
And even with these,
Unhewn, untouched, unseen,
Is something homelike in the safe sweet green,
Intimate in the shade.
Something remembered haunts me,
A familiar aspect suddenly enchants me;

These things were so
When I was here, hundreds of years ago.

Oh, not to-day have I the first time seen
This pool of sunshine, this bending green,
This knotted soil, and underneath the stone
The small gray water singing all alone.
But when my naked soul came wandering down
On the pilgrimage, kind hands did succor me
And clothed me in the guise of grass or soil,
Or a gnat maybe! Making me a shelter
Of root or stone! For surely in their eyes
I see a look of query and surmise,
A begging for love,
As humble parents look upon a child
Returned more wise than they
And strive with all they know to please him so
That he will stay.
Ah, he has traveled far, and many years been gone,
Yet still he is their son, their son, their son!

My wistful kinsfolk, I will not forget
Your simple patois! Oh, 't were shame on me
To grow oblivious to my father's speech!
But I will go
With men, yes, with the angels, slipping so
Into the old vernacular! They will smile

To hear the sweet provincialisms come
With tender thoughts of home.
And God Himself
When I am praising Him, with the great mirth
And radiant ceremonials, will be kind,
That even His Heaven has not rid my mind
Of the quaint customs of my native earth.

We are all brothers! Come, let 's rest awhile
In the great kinship. Underneath the trees
Let 's be at home once more, with birds and bees
And gnats and soil and stone. With these I must
Acknowledge family ties. Our mother, the dust,
With wistful and investigating eyes
Searches my soul for the old sturdiness,
Valor, simplicity! Stout virtues these,
We learned at her dear knees.
Friend, you and I
Once played together in the good old days.
Do you remember? Why, brother, down what
wild ways
We traveled, when —
That 's right! Draw close to me!
Come now, let 's tell the tale beneath the old
roof-tree.

ORA PRO NOBIS

I

While I was still a child so young
I had no words upon my tongue
(Hail Mary.)
They led me to a convent gray
And here they told me I must stay
And learn to think high thoughts and pray.
(Hail Mary.)

They taught me I must keep my ways
Fresh for God's sight and fit for praise,
As clean as angels all my days.
(Hail Mary.)
They taught me that my words should fall
With silence sweet for interval,
And that God's praise should sphere them all
As the sky holds this earthen ball.
(Hail Mary.)

" And my looks too," said I, " shall they
Not praise Him, like a child at play ? "
" *Hush, little Daughter*," answered they,
And made me stitch the livelong day.
(Hail Mary.)

"Let all your thoughts be sweet and mild,
Like the wings of doves, or silver-wild
Sing round God's heart, for thou art a child."
(Hail Mary.)

Long years I dwelt in that dark hall,
There was no mirror on the wall,
I never saw my face at all.
(Hail Mary.)
In a great peace they kept me there,
A straight white robe they had me wear,
And the white bands about my hair.
I did not know that I was fair.
(Hail Mary.)

I did not know how bright my looks
Shone in that place like rippling brooks.
But the gray nuns in shadowy bands
Closed thick around me as the sands
Lift water in their slow grave hands.
And so I glistened all alone
Like a water singing cheerly,
Knowing not it sings so clearly.
Oh, for a wild rush down the mountain!
Hidden in a basin of stone
I sprang and sang like a golden fountain.

Sometimes we sewed at magic gowns
For great gay ladies in the towns,
Color of flame and russet browns,
(Hail Mary.)
Stuff of blue and cloth of red
And thin apparel for the dead,
Stitched in and out with a lily-white thread.
(Hail Mary.)

Sometimes we chanted a slow hymn,
And in the cloister, long and dim,
We stood in ranks like lilies slim.
(Hail Mary.)
The pale Priest swung a starry light,
And sometimes in my dreams at night
The great kind angels warm and bright
Wove me garments of delight.
(Hail Mary.)

Sometimes made strange with cloudlike needs
I used to tell the Lord my beads.
They were as beautiful as deeds
That won the blessèd saints their meeds.
(Hail Mary.)
When to the Crucifix I came
I kissed it, out of love and shame,
And then great wings would round me flame.
(Hail Mary.)

Sometimes alone and vision struck
I made black letters in a book,
Or such a glory round them shook
They blossomed with a flowering look.
I wrought them round with smooth green leaves,
Where scarlet fruitage interweaves,
And the pale light of water-lily sheaves
Spread a tranquil splendor under
A warm vintage of purple and green,
Angels' warm garments shone between,
And mellowed with a yellowed wonder
The rich page of the Breviary,
Whose words stepped in a solemn tune
Mindful of an inner rune
As black nuns in the afternoon
Pace a hot garden, flowered with June.
And those dark words upon the page,
Bound on their holy pilgrimage,
And the brighter words that blazoned them round
Uttered a strange beamy sound
More musical than any sound —
For all the words in the Breviary
Were written in the praise of Mary.
Mary Mother, be thou kind to us,
In thy Heaven, turn thy mind to us,
Among thy angels, be not blind to us!

I give my perfectness to thee,
My innocence and virginity.
Keep me in purity,
So shall I blessèd be.
Ave Maria, Ora Pro Nobis.

Once I that was not wise from age
Left a kiss upon the page.
(Hail Mary.)
I thought the words might bloom more rare
If innocent kisses warmed them there.
I did not know that I was fair.
(Hail Mary.)

II

The corridor was long and lone,
And it was flagged with shining stone,
Polished by feet long dead and gone.
(Holy Mother, pray for us.)
I used to travel every night
Those stones, and as a lily white
Sheds petals, so my taper bright
Reflected a slow swimming light.
(Mary, intercede for us.)

Upon one side a corridor
Into a garden opened sweet,

Heavy with summer, rich with heat,
And sometimes whitened thin with sleet.
(Holy Mother, pray for us.)
At midnight how it used to smell
Of rose and jasmine, and the bell
From the high tower dropped a sound
Sphering through the spicy dell
Orbed and golden to the ground.
I used to wonder, if I found it,
With all its music wrapped around it,
If I could keep it shaped just so,
A star of sound in a golden glow.

The whole year long and every night
My bare feet traveled, silver white.
Looking neither left nor right,
In my hand I held a light.
(Holy Mother, pray for us.)
I went with oil to Mary's shrine
To feed the blessèd light divine
That perpetually must shine.
(Mary, intercede for us.)

Of all the nuns I was the least.
Each night I met the pale worn Priest,
Whose fasting was his only feast,
(Holy Mother, pray for us.)

Pacing darkly by the wall
To the nuns' confessional,
I could hear his footsteps fall,
Stop at the cross, and that was all.
(Mary, intercede for us.)

I knew how once upon the stone
Kissing the cross he prayed alone
Until its pangs consumed his bone,
And in his flesh that grief was shown.
(Holy Mother, pray for us.)
And now upon his hands and breast
Christ's precious wounds were manifest,
Making him holier than the rest.
(Mary, intercede for us.)

Three long years I faced him there
Every night, and felt his prayer
Shine round him like a starry air.
(Holy Mother, pray for us.)
He turned from me his unseeing eye
Like one who was about to die,
And knelt at the cross as I passed by.
(Mary, intercede for us.)

It was upon a winter's night,
My bare feet traveled, silver white

Through fine sheer sleet that glittered bright.
Looking neither left nor right,
In my hand I bore a light.
A garment spun of whirling sleet
Wove me round from head to feet,
I shone as in a winding sheet.

My clinging feet left blood upon
The sharp strange coldness of the stone.
I drifted on without a moan.
(Holy Mother, pray for us.)
Before the blast my head was bent,
I could not see which way I went,
When at the cross I fell, clean spent.
(Mary, intercede for us.)

The Priest came staggering through the blast.
For forty nights he kept his fast
Even like the Christ — this was the last.
(Holy Mother, pray for us.)
His cast-out dreams appeared to glow,
A pageant and a blazing show,
Round about I saw them go,
Fire woven in a snow.
(Mary, intercede for us.)

The visions that he drove from him
About my eyelids, beating dim,

Like radiant vapors seemed to swim,
And suddenly unfurled,
The air showed in its cordial fold
High blazoned chambers floored with gold
Built in a magic world.

Strong blocks of air reared musical
Were quarried for a shining wall,
With thrill of lute and zithern call,
I seemed to know the names of all.
The wind was shaped in colonnades,
Turret and dome and long arcades,
While blossoming fruit trees cast their shades
Over the laughing cavalcades
Of knights and ladies, lads and maids.
High flowering vines reached up to clamber
In sunlit rings to icy airs,
Green boughs laughed out with plums and pears,
While silvery feet of dancing fairs
Wheeled, like white birds, down golden stairs
To a golden paven chamber
Whereon their footfalls shone like amber.

The Priest beat on his breast and cried,
"I will not see them." Barren eyed
He stared them from him and defied.
(Holy Mother, pray for us.)

The towers built of thought and dream
A moment terribly did gleam,
Then ran like water in a stream.
(Mary, intercede for us.)

He beat from him the beauteous net.
About his brow the frozen sweat
Flashed like a visor sternly set.
(Holy Mother, pray for us.)
"If I can reach the cross," he cried,
"Whereon my Lord was crucified,
Then the whole world has been denied,
Devil, beast, or human."
Bleeding before the cross he knelt,
Dimly through the snow he felt,
And his kiss fell on me — a woman.

The sweet chill fragrance of the snow
More fine than lilies all aglow
Breathed around — he saw me so,
In garments spun of fire and snow.
(Holy Mother, pray for us.)
His hands were on my face and hair,
His high, stern eyes that would forswear
All earthly beauty, saw me there.
Oh, then I knew that I was fair!
(Mary, intercede for us.)

He drove me from him through the night.
My bare feet traveled, silver white.
Looking neither left nor right,
In my hand I held a light,
(Holy Mother, pray for us.)
I went with oil to Mary's shrine
To feed the blessèd light divine
That perpetually must shine.
(Mary, intercede for us.)

III

Great is the will and great the need
Of him who strives against a deed,
How often does he faint and bleed;
But he can crouch behind a stone,
Or hide in barren fields alone,
Bondsman until the hour is done.

Sterner is the battle fought
By him who strives against a thought.

I knelt before the shrine that day
Where Mary smiles on them that pray,
Not once I let my thoughts astray.

I kept my dreams on angels' wings,
And oh, they were but empty things,
Frail lights and golden vanishings.

'Twixt him and me the Holy Cup
Pale hands of thought had lifted up,
But lo, it broke ere I could sup.
(Sweet Mary, pray for us.)
'Twixt him and me I brought the face
Of my dead Christ and sued for grace,
But his looks blurred it from the place.
(Ave Maria, Ora Pro Nobis.)

The thoughts I sent 'twixt me and him
Like holy incense fluttered dim
(Sweet Mary, pray for us.)
A moment breathed, a fragile sheen,
A simple blueness blown between,
A little dimness briefly seen.
(Ave Maria, Ora Pro Nobis.)

Oh, then I ran with battling cries,
Beating the vision from my eyes.
Yes, round and round in frantic wise!
But still that thought would seem to blow
And drift my body like helpless snow
In a strange shape I did not know,—
A foolish, white, and dropping thing,
That hurried where I would not go,
Distraught with wandering.

Then I raised up to God my prayer,
I swept its strong and circling air
Betwixt me and the great despair.
(Sweet Mary, pray for us.)
But when before the sacred shrine
I knelt to kiss the cross benign,
Mary, I thought his lips touched mine.
(Ave Maria, Ora Pro Nobis.)

Stepping darkly by the wall
One and one, with slow footfall,
We entered the confessional.
(Sweet Mary, pray for us.)
I thought that Heaven would take me in
If so I did but speak my sin.
(Ave Maria, Ora Pro Nobis.)

Softly to the grate I trod;
He seemed to me more far than God;
My great shame scourged me like a rod.
"*Father, I think of you all day,*
I cannot work. I cannot pray.
I love you. Purge my love away."

Then he, with eyes that saw me not,
Spoke with pure lips that had forgot.
(Holy Mother, pray for us.)

"Go thou to Mary's shrine to-night
And keep with oil the eternal light,
But ere thou goest from her sight
(Sweet Mary, pray for us.)
Take thou the fearful rods and thresh
The forbidden dreaming from thy flesh."
(Mary, intercede for us.)

IV

In the middle of the night
My bare feet traveled, sleety white.
Looking neither left nor right,
In my hand I held a light.
(Hail Mary.)
I went with oil to Mary's shrine
To feed the blessèd light divine
That perpetually must shine.
(Mary, intercede for us.)

Before my trembling hand could lift
The sacred oil for her gift
(Hail Mary.)
I scourged my body till it leapt
And I could hear it — how it wept.
Then broken to her feet I crept
And worn with that great vigil, slept.
(Mary, intercede for us.)

When I woke, I saw his face
Float towards me in that empty space.
Mary's white figure, bowered in grace,
Shone on us from her lighted place.
(Sweet Mary, pray for us.)
" Lord, keep me from this child," he cried,
" Or it were better I had died."
And straight, I found him at my side.
(Mary, intercede for us.)

My cheek upon his bosom laid,
I saw the eternal burning fade.
With sacred oil it was not stayed.
(Sweet Mary, pray for us.)
I would have lighted it, but oh,
His circling arm contained me so!
Dark came. I had no will to go.
(Mary, intercede for us.)

V

They scourged us round the walls of gray,
They stoned us till the end of day.
They drove him, where I cannot say.
(Hail Mary.)
They shut me in a cell of stone.
Years and years are dead and gone
Since I have tarried here alone.
(Hail Mary.)

They took my new-born child away,
I have not seen her since that day.
What sweet prayers has she learned to say!
(Hail Mary.)
There used to be a convent bell
Dropped golden sound through a spicy dell;
I can remember it so well.
(Hail Mary.)

One time I used to go at night
And feed with oil the virgin's light.
Sometimes the sleet would glitter bright.
(Hail Mary.)
Some was blue and some was red
And some was white to please the dead.
We sewed it with a lily-white thread.
(Hail Mary.)

A jasmine grew beside the wall;
The moon hung like a yellow ball.
I have never seen my face at all.

They took him far and far away
To a dark cell, I heard them say,
That never sees the light of day.
Each night at twelve they have him pray.
(Hail Mary.)

When at that hour before the shrine
I kiss, like him, the cross benign,
Father in Heaven — his lips touch mine.
(Hail Mary.)

I have grown old and spent with age
But still my hand is swift and sage
To make sweet letters on a page.
And all the words in the Breviary
Are written in the praise of Mary.
Mary Mother, be thou kind to us!
In thy Heaven have a mind to us!
Among thy angels be not blind to us!
I give my perfectness to thee,
My innocence and virginity,
Keep me in purity.
So shall I blessèd be.
Ave Maria, Ora Pro Nobis.

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